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Adam Smith
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**A dialectical exploration of ethical leadership and
counterproductive work behaviour in the Saudi higher education
sector: Gendered constraints and reactions**

Thesis Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis critically explores the dialectics of ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviour. It investigates the extent to which presumed 'ethical' leadership conduct can simultaneously be perceived as counterproductive within Saudi higher education institutions (HEIs). The distinctive nature of this gender segregated organisational context offers the researcher an effective means of revealing and exploring the characteristics that inform ethical complexities, as well as deeply engrained patterns of gendered leadership behaviour. Specifically, this thesis critically investigates female leadership practices, in the context of a university that claims to create an ethical and empowered environment for women. It details and contrasts the views of senior managers and those in executive level roles with the perceptions and reactions to their leadership from front line female academics. While ethical leadership studies and prescriptive literature highlight a role for ethical concern with regard to effective leadership, mainstream approaches frequently fail to acknowledge the impact of gendered, institutional or cultural power as co-constructors of 'ethical' leadership behaviour and generators of concern and counterproductive consequences for subordinates.

In this thesis, the dialectical approach is employed to investigate and acknowledge the significant power leaders hold in the workplace, while simultaneously appreciating countervailing influences and the construction of power relations. The analysis here explores multiple, complex and contradictory aspects, wherein Saudi female leaders' perceptions of ethical leadership are that they seek to address and act on equality concerns and empowerment issues affecting women, but which are perceived as compromised and often oppressive and counterproductive by female faculty members who are part of the same marginalised social group.

Utilising data collected from 25 Saudi females, comprising both leaders and faculty members, and engaging in a process of participant observation over five faculty meetings, the findings highlight three key themes in dialectical thinking with regard to ethical and counterproductive leadership, revealing multiple individualistic, organisational and socio-cultural aspects. Despite women's empowerment being articulated as the overt mantra, many forms of inequality remain covert and present. These impact negatively on the Saudi female faculty members, with negative consequences for their career advancement and work experience. Reflecting on these results, this thesis directs attention towards some very basic, though often neglected, elements of gender and power in the co-construction of 'masculine

ethics' in female leadership contexts and practices. It also illuminates perspectives encompassing the necessary expansion of social and relational ethics to generate greater opportunities for social justice and cohesion in those workplaces occupied by Saudi women.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Introduction

Unveiled Saudi female stories concerning the constraints of supposedly ethical leadership

The ethical issues and dilemmas encountered by Saudi women within organisations are intimately connected with my own personal interests as a professional working in Saudi Higher Education (HE), as well as to my purpose as a researcher to explore and reveal the forms of social oppression undertaken in the name of ‘leadership’.

My position as a female academic in one of Saudi Arabia’s Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has made me acutely aware of differing forms of unfair behaviours related to leadership. In addition, I am convinced that this exemplifies an ongoing struggle for many Saudi female academics who are experiencing patriarchal university systems, in which the majority of such academics have been silenced.

As a researcher, I believe that any exploration of our ethical concerns as women invokes a number of complexities. Throughout our lives, we have been culturally taught to accept the established norms and conform to particular patriarchal morals. However, I firmly believe that the recently acknowledged current period of Saudi gender progression and female empowerment offers a timely opportunity to expose ongoing masculine dominance and power in relation to the construction of leadership, with the aim of reproducing or reinforcing the prevailing social and gender divisions, and so inhibiting solidarity. I thus feel that it is an appropriate time to acknowledge organisational forms of violence, particularly against female employees.

My research into ethical leadership is related to the emerging and compelling stories of Saudi female academics. I believe that any ethical leadership study which is detached from its society has a tendency to create an incomplete and narrow exploration. I feel that, in order to understand how we connect in terms of ‘ethical leadership crisis’, we first need to ensure that our ‘divided’ stories are heard, as well as considering the context of these stories, and embracing their local meaning making and experiences.

Placing leadership within the context of Saudi HEIs sheds light on a number of ethical issues that deserve to be exposed and stories that need to be heard. In doing so, this research captures the voices of Saudi female academics, alongside acknowledging their perceptions and reactions to matters of ethical leadership.

The Saudi HE system is segregated by gender, with universities establishing separate campuses for males and females. Leadership roles in Saudi HE institutions are primarily occupied by males. However, over the previous two decades, there has been a significant development in the role of Saudi women, both in their social and professional lives. According to Jamjoom et al. (2013):

The rise of Saudi women as a social power is considered across Arab society to be the most vital among the social changes currently taking place. About 30 years ago, it was possible to describe Saudi Arabia as ‘the society of men’, because men monopolised professional work, as well as all kinds of political, economic and social authority. But now this image has started to change, and women are carrying out important roles across all of these spheres. There are female doctors, female university teachers and professors and female businesswomen. Today’s Saudi women work in scientific laboratories, in the press and other media and in factories. (Jamjoom et al., 2013:118)

Part of this ambitious transformation, which has marked a turning point for Saudi women in the leadership of HEIs over the last two decades, concerns the establishment of women’s universities. One of the core female universities in Saudi is a ‘Distinctive Segregated University’, henceforth DSU, being so named by the researcher for the purposes of anonymity and confidentiality. The establishment of DSU has expanded the opportunities available for Saudi women to lead a Saudi university as a transformational step towards gender equality.

Saudi females in the current literature are widely labelled as an oppressed group. This creates a gap where their agency should be, and ignores their experiences within the local contexts that affect their experiences. What is addressed in the studies that investigate women and leadership is mainly western based preoccupations that are informed by the experiences of white women (Manning, 2018). This academic imperialism (Asubaie et al., 2017; Dupre, 1994) is deeply rooted and generalises upon western women’s experiences at the expense of real local contexts and content.

A number of Saudi scholars, including Alahmadi (2011) Alomair (2015) and Alsubaie et al., (2017), have remained preoccupied with women's occupational struggles for leadership roles as an explicit ethical issue related to fairness and the achievement of equality. However, only a limited number of such studies have moved beyond the male/female dichotomy to discuss the covert 'masculine ethics' that are embodied within leadership constructions that currently act to hinder fairness for women and which, at the same time, are also practiced by female leaders themselves.

When we think of ethical issues within a unique gendered workplace such as DSU, a major area of discussion tends to focus on the practices of gendered relations and social unity or division. Due to DSU being a single-sex context, the creation of ethical tensions and divisions between leadership and followership may appear to be un-gendered. However, the experiences of female staff and leaders have been found to evoke aspects of masculine/feminine power relationships. Thus, discrimination and unfairness may be sustained through minority masculinities, such as female leadership practices in DSU. According to Halberstam (1998:1): "masculinity must not, and cannot and should not, reduce down to the male body and its effects". Therefore, the ethical challenge within women-only contexts concerns an accurate and detailed exploration of the various forms of masculine power, as well as identifying those implicit forms of female oppression that may be or are practiced by women themselves.

Rationale of the thesis

Several factors led to my decision to pursue PhD research in this area. Firstly, understanding my role as a Saudi female academic and having work experience in a Saudi higher education institution (HEI) made me aware of the struggles that female faculty members encounter within Saudi HEIs. Obstacles such as inflexible leadership and prevailing norms about hierarchical relationships prevent female academics from voicing their views. I wanted to explore, discuss, and reveal ethical issues related to leadership and gender in these organizational contexts in order to claim space for wider scrutiny and take further steps toward social change. It is important to present female views and experiences in real situations and places that have applied and prioritized a male lens on leadership and work behaviour. In this instance, it is vital to consider and as necessary to expose how female academics are treated unjustly and are obliged to deal with different forms of counterproductive leadership behaviour, even from their female leaders who belong to the same marginalized group within this system. To date, leadership studies have largely

neglected this reproduction of masculinised leadership, making it difficult to recognise my own experiences or the situation of fellow female academics within established academic and prescriptive leadership debates.

This underscores the second impetus for my research, namely that studies on ethics and leadership are overwhelmingly Western-based, individualistic, and leader-centred. Others have also recognised this (including, Liu, 2017; Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2018), and with it the consequence that consideration of vital cultural and historical background factors is limited. The mainstream positivist research on ethical leadership appears to ignore the social and cultural construction of leadership behaviour. Even among the growing critical literature that acknowledges the significant role of national and organizational cultures, very few studies shed any light on gender segregated contexts. Despite some emerging, though limited, research in Saudi women's leadership (e.g., Alahmadi, 2011), and more specifically female management positions within Saudi HEIs (e.g., Alomair, 2015; Alsubaie et al., 2017), the majority of studies tend to focus on the barriers encountered by Saudi women who endeavour to achieve leadership roles. This is inadequate, deflecting attention from the relational nature of leadership and taking leader behaviour for granted as typically positive and functional, rather than possibly counterproductive or corrosive. Hence the present thesis, with its focus on female leaders and academics in a segregated university, aims to fill this vacuum by looking specifically at gendered leadership roles and practices among men and women and calling wider attention to the exploration of neglected contexts, experiences and reactions.

Situating this research within the current literature

This thesis investigates the extent to which the power constructs and practices of DSU leaders can be presumed to be ethical, as well as considering which ones are perceived by faculty members to be counterproductive. Here, the exercise of power by leaders can be simultaneously ethical, productive and empowering, as well as unethical, toxic and counterproductive. As stated by Collinson (2020:7): "Different forms of power can be in tension with one another and may also produce unanticipated and unacknowledged effects. Power can be paradoxical and contradictory, with unintended outcomes".

In order to explore the tensions associated with an understanding of ethical and counterproductive leadership, it is first crucial to examine three specific areas of the existing literature. The thesis is thus located at three intersecting lines of research and publication:

firstly, ethical leadership, secondly, counterproductive work behaviour and, thirdly, dialectical critical leadership studies.

Firstly, ethical leadership is now considered to be one of the main areas within wider leadership studies (Brown et al., 2005; Brown and Trevino, 2006; Ciulla, 2004; Ciulla and Forsyth, 2011). The authors mentioned here offer a view on ethical leadership from a number of abstract perspectives, notably including what it is that makes a leader ethical, and how he/she should behave. However, there appear to be a number of issues with studies focused on individualistic, Western-centric and power neutral ethical leadership studies (Liu, 2017; Knight and O’Leary, 2006). There is thus a clear need to go beyond the established abstract notions of ethical leadership frameworks to obtain a deeper understanding of ethical failure within organisations, particularly where these are clearly gendered in nature. Furthermore, although it is mainly subordinates who find themselves dealing with such ethical consequences of leadership practices, currently mainstream studies remain preoccupied with moral traits and the ‘assessment tools’ of the leaders themselves.

Secondly, counterproductive work behaviour is presented in the mainstream literature as harmful and damaging to both individuals and organisations. However, it is primarily associated with workers, with most writers examining this aspect tending to neglect the behaviour of leaders themselves, apart from dealing with this in their subordinates. A number of scholars (i.e. Vardi and Wiener, 1996; Fox and Spector, 1999; Spector et al., 2006; Robinson and Bennett, 1995) have tended to place an emphasis on the misbehaviour of subordinates as a factor requiring managerial intervention, sanction and control. On the other hand, the focus on ‘the dark side’ of a leader’s behaviour is explored in a distinct area of the current critical literature. Studies examining leadership behaviours that are considered bad (Kellerman, 2004), destructive (Krasikova et al., 2013), toxic (Lipman-Blumen, 2005) and tyrannical (Ashforth, 1994) explore the opposite side of ‘good’ leadership behaviour. Yet, these studies tend to overlook the complexity of both power relations and context, which require a greater appreciation to embrace the complexity of leadership practices within an explicit organisational context.

The third relevant area of the literature consists of critical leadership studies. This is a ‘loose umbrella’ term, covering diverse perspectives and critiques of social construction and power relations within leadership (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012; Collinson, 2005; Tourish, 2013). Research within critical leadership studies focuses on challenging traditional orthodox

understandings of leadership that tend to undervalue the role of power. As noted by Schedlitzki and Edwards (2018:335): “the aim of these studies is to explore and examine critically society’s taken-for-granted assumptions on leadership and to challenge the overly positive, unitary view of leadership in organisations”.

Within critical leadership studies, a dialectical approach problematises the binary distinction and dichotomising tendencies in studies focusing on leadership (Collinson, 2005-2014). Collinson (2014:42) stated that: “dialectical perspectives re-frame presumed opposites and fixed binary poles as intrinsically interrelated concepts”. This infers that this approach aims to deconstruct binary oppositions in leadership practice (such as leader/follower) by maintaining that such either/or dichotomies are dialectically inter-related. Significantly, this perspective places a greater emphasis on the agency of followers, particularly in terms of leader-follower dynamics, which may result in contradictory conditions, processes and consequences (Fairhurst, 2001). Moreover, focusing on one specific discrete dialectical aspect implies overlooking the significant interplay of inter-connections and tensions. For instance, researchers investigating leader/follower dialectics frequently overlook various dimensions (notably including gender and race) that are capable of playing a role in shaping such leadership practices (Collinson, 2005-2020).

The theoretical approach: the dialectical lens

The notable dichotomy between ethical and counterproductive behaviour in leadership practices has left a considerable gap in the literature when it comes to the exploration of the interrelated ‘dialectics’ between the two concepts. This current study therefore aims to bridge this gap as follows. Firstly, it straddles the boundary lines between ethical leadership and counterproductive behaviour, in particular by emphasising the complexity and layers within these two concepts and appreciating the role of power. Secondly, it contributes to the ongoing critical leadership studies movement that challenges individualistic, white, male-dominated and Western assumptions that are currently reinforced by mainstream leadership research. This will be achieved through the addition of empirical work in Saudi Arabia, where there is dearth of studies aimed at challenging the heroic understandings of leadership, alongside broadening the existing culturally limited views of gender roles and the meanings attached to both femininity and masculinity.

In this research, I follow this dialectical approach to problematise the current view of ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviour in Saudi higher education. This requires

an in-depth understanding of organisational, local and social constructions of leadership, with an explicit recognition that leadership is a complex social and relational process within organisations, contexts and time. This will result in the definition of what counts as ethical or counterproductive being a highly complex, subjective and mostly contradictory process.

Research Aim and Questions

The aim for this study is to dialectically examine and problematize the conventional understanding of ethical leadership, and to question the extent to which it reproduces counterproductive practices among leaders themselves. The thesis aims to address these issues within a gender segregated institution, specifically in the context of Saudi HEIs, by focusing on female leaders' and academics' experiences and perspectives.

The thesis questions the extent to which DSU's leaders' perspectives, assumptions, and behaviours regarding ethical leadership could be perceived by female faculty members as counterproductive practices.

The main questions addressed in this thesis reflect its objectives and establish the orientation of the study. These are:

RQ1.

How both female leaders and academics perceive ethical leadership within DSU.

RQ2.

How the organisational context produces dialectics between ethical leadership and counterproductive behaviour in DSU.

RQ3.

How Saudi socio-culture establishes ethical leadership in DSU, with particular emphasis on counterproductive outcomes.

The structure of the thesis

This thesis commences with a critical review of the existing literature examining ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviour. It critically explores established theories that have previously limited the concept of ethical leadership and reveals how critical scholars have highlighted certain limitations that challenge the dominant mainstream accounts. This first chapter explores further sense making in relation to counterproductive work behaviour and its boundaries, focusing primarily on the behaviour of employees while ignoring that of their leaders. In discussing the limitations of both ethical leadership and

counterproductive work behaviour, the chapter clarifies the binary between these concepts, alongside the need for a dialectical approach to outline the interconnected dialectics of power between ethical/counterproductive leadership.

Chapter Two introduces the context of the study, so providing an overview of leadership and higher education with respect to the role of women and debates related to masculinity and femininity. The chapter also provides various insights into cultural studies of leadership and focuses on the socio-cultural and historical background of Saudi HE. In addition, it provides further details concerning the role of Saudi women in HEI leadership.

Chapter Three outlines the research objectives and approach. This chapter positions the investigation within the various philosophical assumptions and research paradigms, before providing a detailed explanation of the research method and data collection process. This is followed by details of the data analysis and an identification of the research themes. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations required when researching leadership ethics.

Chapter Four presents the findings in light of the study's objectives. The chapter explores the data gathered from the interviews, as well as from meetings, observations and field notes. From the data, the chapter presents three dominant themes that serve to shape the dialectical construction of ethical and counterproductive leadership practices in the research context.

Chapter Five then extends this aspect with a detailed discussion that relates the main findings of the study to existing literature, spelling out the significance of the empirical work. The discussion here focuses on the value of a dialectical exploration of the perceptions of Saudi leaders and academics, accompanied by follower reactions in relation to ethical leadership and counterproductive outcomes.

Chapter Six is the final chapter of this thesis. It takes the form of an overview, revisiting the aims and objectives of the study, as well as the highlighting the key findings and the contribution of this research. In addition, this chapter candidly considers various limitations of this research, while also offering an examination of the implications for both policy and practice. The thesis concludes by offering recommendations for future research that follow logically or arise from this study.

Chapter One

A Critical Assessment of Ethical Leadership and counterproductive work behaviour

1.1 Introduction

There has recently been a dramatic increase in the levels of interest applied to questions of ‘ethical leadership’. This has partly been in response to media reports of leadership failures (notably in banking and health care), as well as academic work that has connected such failures to essentialist mainstream studies (e.g. Brown and Mitchell, 2010; Ciulla, 2009; Treviño et al., 2003) that have reinforced the image of leadership as demanding heroic personal qualities or sacred leadership characteristics.

Critical reactions to these studies have suggested that mainstream thinking about leadership is both over simplified and too narrowly focused on the positive attributes of those individuals occupying senior positions (Collinson, 2012). One aspect is the criticism aimed at the ethical leadership framework advocated by Brown et al. (2005) as being too individualistic, decontextualised and power-neutral (Liu, 2017; Knights and O’Leary, 2006). Given the recurring scandals that have occurred within various sectors, and within differing contexts, this current chapter will demonstrate a need to go beyond such established abstract discussions to focus on the everyday unsensitised realities, patterns and consequences of leader behaviour. This infers eschewing mythical images and glamorised prescriptive accounts of what leadership involves and requires, in order to develop a more nuanced conceptual grasp of leadership and its impact. While this includes significant ethical and effective behaviour patterns, it also brings into focus hitherto hidden and neglected aspects of unethical, damaging and counterproductive leadership, particularly when the experiences and evaluations of followers are taken into account. This is particularly significant as connecting the available critical insights into leadership and counterproductive behavioural work organisations provides a useful way forward for theoretical and applied research. As such, it is a central aspect of this thesis.

Counterproductive work behaviour is generally presented in organisational literature as a factor viewed as inherently damaging and harmful to individuals or groups. Yet, the principal focus is generally placed on workers, to the neglect of senior managers and appointed leaders. Scholars such as Vardi and Wiener (1996) Fox and Spector (1999) and Robinson and Bennett (1995) have tended to view counterproductive behaviour as consisting of the

misbehaviours of followers, which thus requires managerial intervention, sanction and control. Although these authors view misbehaviours as “the dark side of organisations”, the related leadership literature tends to present ‘the dark side’ of any behaviours pursued by leaders as unusual and exceptional. It should be acknowledged that there are a number of studies that have focussed on leadership behaviours that are: (1) bad (Kellerman, 2004); (2) destructive (Krasikova et al., 2013); (3) toxic (Lipman-Blumen, 2005); and (4) tyrannical (Ashforth, 1994, 1997). However, these tend to offer mirror images of the mainstream, so reinforcing prescriptive notions of good leadership by exposing such supposedly rare cases of ‘leaders gone wrong’, with the emphasis being placed on the opposite side of ‘good’ leadership behaviour. These studies have little to say about power, the relative context, and the working out of relations between leaders and followers. Instead, they polarise ‘good’ and ‘bad’ leadership, alongside underlining the need for more sensitive and conceptually sophisticated insights.

This chapter commences by outlining and critically assessing the conceptual distinction between ethical leadership theory and counterproductive work behaviour. It navigates a route between the relevant debates, both within and across these areas, so highlighting the complexity, contradictions and paradoxes in ethical and counterproductive practices and promoting a dialectical appreciation of key issues for leadership in HE (Collinson, 2005-2020).

1.2 Definitions of key concepts

In organizational research, the concept of **ethical leadership** is mainly influenced by Brown and others’ (2005) definition. The authors characterize ethical leadership as ‘the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making’ (2005, p. 120).

Counterproductive work behaviour’s classic definition by Spector et al. is ‘intentional acts by employees that harm organizations or their stakeholders’ (2006, p. 8).

This thesis defines the key concept of leadership behaviour through a **relational** lens. According to Uhl-Bien (2006, p. 64), a ‘*relational* perspective views leadership as a *process of social construction*’. This means:

‘Relational leadership is not a theory or model of leadership; it draws on an intersubjective view of the world to offer a way of thinking about who leaders are in relation to others (human beings) and how they might work with others within the complexity of experience. Relational leadership means recognizing the entwined nature of our relationships with others.’ (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011, p. 14.)

(P: 21, 22)

1.3 Ethical leadership clichés

1.3.1 The heroic leader

Issues related to ethics and morality in leadership studies have long been intertwined (Brown and Mitchell, 2010; Ciulla and Forsyth, 2011). Over the previous decade, they have also attracted some critical attention as a result of a number of well publicised corporate scandals, including those at Enron and WorldCom, the Royal Bank of Scotland and in the British National Health Service (Francis, 2013; Bedi et al., 2016). However, such prescriptive and developmental accounts are persistently optimistic when it comes to the essential morality and effectiveness of aspiring and appointed leaders, including turning a blind eye to the counterproductive aspects or presenting these as minimal or exceptional, rather than demonstrating any serious intention to examine the extent, and full repercussions, of unethical leadership practices. This has resulted in a simplification of the ethical leadership phenomenon, at the expense of capturing a complex and messy reality.

Ciulla (2004) viewed relevant phenomena through a philosophical lens, aiming to reshape normative models by focussing greater attention on contemporary virtues and valuing a collective sense of what leadership ‘ought to be’ (Ciulla 2004, 2005). This philosophical conceptualisation considers an individual’s capacity to be an ethical and effective leader. Ciulla (2005) believed that leaders need to be aware of ethical intentions, processes and outcomes, so accommodating wider collective perceptions and interpretations in place of reproducing elitist or detached leader centric positions. Similarly, Price (2008) stated that leaders have a rational obligation to respect and assist others. Here, ethics are presented in terms of a leader’s responsibility (or duty) as a rational agent, not least when it comes to retaining a commitment to those further down the hierarchy. These studies have highlighted the danger of overlooking ‘others’ when evaluating ethical leadership behaviour, as well as a failure to consider the consequences of such practices to employees, along with and their reactions. Painter-Morland (2006) argued that the tendency to isolate leaders’ morality reinforces their personal bias, including their sense of having the prerogative to choose

‘right’ over ‘wrong’, i.e. ‘right’ being leader determined. A safe conclusion is that these moral essentialist views are leader-centric and neglect relational views of leadership. The corollary is to perpetuate heroic notions of leadership and to symbolise a leader as an individual in possession of some core ethical integrity, along with a capacity to resolve moral dilemmas (Lawler and Ashman, 2012).

By contrast, social scientific approaches focus on assessing the ways ethical leadership can be perceived by others within an organisation (Brown et al., 2005; Brown and Mitchell, 2010; Brown and Treviño, 2006; Walumbwa and Schaubroeck, 2009). This approach considers the perception of a leader’s behaviour in the workplace, including whether it can be judged ethical or immoral, and with what consequences (Brown et al., 2005; Brown and Mitchell, 2010; Brown and Treviño, 2006). For example, Michael Brown, Linda Treviño and their colleagues stated that an ethical leader is seen as both a moral manager and a moral person. They also viewed a ‘moral person’ as suggesting that a leader is trustworthy, fair and honest, as well as continuing to maintain a concern for others (Treviño et al., 2000), while a moral manager is a leader who occupies (or exemplifies) high moral principles, including ensuring their application by means of punishment and reward (ibid).

1.3.2 The role model

Brown and Trevino (2006) applied social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) to view leaders as role models and examine their capacity to influence their followers to emulate their own superior sense of ethical behaviour. Brown et al. (2005, 2006) further stated that employees are more likely to learn (and emulate) ethical behaviour when their leaders act as role models, i.e. exemplifying and inculcating ethical standards. In addition, this is considered as ensuring that they are viewed as more attractive by their followers. This individualistic and leader-centred construction of ethical leadership is built on various assumptions concerning the ethical traits of a leader (i.e. personal characteristics) alongside the capacity of a role model to exert influence. It reproduces images of a superior and top-driven shaping of organisational values, sanitising those in leadership roles and deflecting attention away from any potential breaching of ethical standards at this level (Knights and O’Leary, 2006). As a result, mainstream discussions of ethics in leadership have tended to remain abstract and incapable of problematising leadership behaviour, with Liu (2017:344) noting that: “if leadership is believed to be intrinsically ethical, what space does this allow for meaningful dialogues around what it means to be an ethical leader?”

It is, however, insufficient to list the ethical traits and behaviours of preferred or admired leaders, while at the same time ignoring or dismissing those of bad or troubling leaders as exceptions, as this detracts from the relational settling of what counts as ethical and counterproductive. The meanings ascribed to these terms are not exclusively (or even mainly) in the hands of those occupying leadership roles, providing leader development courses or writing prescriptively about ethical behaviour in work organisations. Issues of ethics are shaped by multiple interpretations and complex socialising processes, both within and beyond the workplace. Making sense of how they influence relationships and behaviour patterns thus requires an appreciation of the role of power, and specifically accompanied by a relational understanding of what it involves and how it matters, as well as what it means for the wider community within organisations.

Of course, it may be conceded that a key aspect of the above is ‘role modelling’ power. However, this covers only part of what is involved, even when this includes the role modelling behaviour of workers, group leaders and influential others outside the formal leadership structure. In addition, their capacity to set the prevailing standards of ethical behaviour and decide what amounts to immorality is not decisive. It is also influenced by the interpretations and reactions of the wider community in a workplace, which may question (or fail to accept) the opinion of a leader, in which case their responses and/or leader action may be presented as counterproductive rather than safe, wise or production centred. It has recently proved popular when exploring ethical leadership to highlight the role of followers’ perceptions. However, this wider relational dimension is generally lacking, with the default position perpetuating traditional leader-centric approaches by setting out a range of perceived ethical traits that followers tend to find attractive and motivational. The complexity of relational shaping and relative judging of whether (or to what extent) leader behaviour can be seen as ethical slips into the background, so limiting our understanding of the capacity of followers to both assess, and act on, their own ideas of ethical conduct. It is therefore essential to explore the ethics of leadership from point of view of followers, although this also raises issues concerning power and struggle in relation to the conduct of leadership.

1.3.3 The rational and spiritual leader

In order to establish a firm platform for the approach advocated here, it is beneficial to return to the philosophical approaches to leadership and the attention given to ‘good’ and ethical behaviour as a fundamental aspect of leadership. Ciulla and Forsyth (2011) argued that the

question of what constitutes a leader actually refers to the issue of what constitutes a good leader, while an in-depth exploration of the meaning of 'good' is constructed on some moral notion. Ciulla and Forsyth (2011) also stated that an ethical leader consists of: "someone who not only does the right thing but also does so in the right way and for the right reason" (Ciulla and Forsyth, 2011:230). A key paradox related to this notion is that it fails to pin down the meanings attached to 'good' and 'right', as well as clarifying the identity of those who can decide the nature of what is right. Although critical in their orientation, these accounts can, at times, approximate the mainstream, in particular by privileging leaders' moral values, views and concerns when it comes to shaping 'right' for others. Yet, as previously noted, employees are far from passive in the process of view-forming concerning the presence (or lack of) moral values among their leaders, and are also capable of resisting the moral guidance issued from organisational leaders.

As outlined in a number of further studies, philosophical approaches tend to highlight the role of virtue in senior figures, drawing largely on the views of ancient philosophers and religious or spiritual leaders, notably Aristotle, Confucius and Buddha (Ciulla, 2001, Ciulla and Forsyth, 2011). From a prescriptive position, Price (2008) suggested that leaders should follow Kantian philosophy and accept moral standards as a duty. However, casting leaders as ethical and rational agents maintains the fantasy related to traditional leadership, while at the same time deflecting attention from less palatable leader behaviours and critical responses from employees, as outlined above (Liu, 2017). It also has a decontextualising impact, tending to compress ideological endorsements, i.e. to particular Eastern and typically Western variants. Concepts of ethical philosophy vary culturally and historically, thus resisting neat and settled generalisation.

Context is not only lacking in much of the mainstream consideration of ethical leadership, it is also appropriated for particular characterisations pertaining to what matters. Authors such as Fry (2003) and Fairholm (2011) have argued that spirituality forms the core of leadership. Fry (2003) identified two key areas of spiritual leadership, firstly, individual vision (i.e. a leader's calling) and secondly, engendering loyalty among the work force. Fry and colleagues (2011) separated spirituality from religion, arguing that religious notions are influenced by theological basics and rituals, while spirituality refers to values and the human spirit. Critical scholars such as Tourish and Tourish (2010:207) argued against this treatment of spirituality as it "seeks to reinforce the power of leaders at the expense of autonomy for their followers".

1.4 Towards leadership and ethics problematisation

Ethical leadership theories tend to assume that, in terms of hierarchical power, leaders tend to behave ethically and in accordance with their personal virtues, so acting rationally and with integrity for the good of their entire organisation (Tourish, 2010; Liu, 2017). The established 'ethical leadership' theory was represented by Brown et al. (2005), who can be viewed as neglecting the real ethical clashes and dilemmas that form part of organisational life. Their account fails to focus on how the dynamics of organisation can differ across contexts, sectors, communities and even situations, while leadership itself is constructed differently in several organisational and cultural settings. This infers that most of these traditional approaches, through their Western design, generalise the results of studies, assuming that these are based on 'facts'. To date, the majority of studies in the field of ethical leadership have only focused on these mainstream approaches, although these have, however, failed to address the complexity of issues related to ethics issues in terms of the context of leadership.

How leaders behave, and their followers respond, within the dynamic of daily work is both highly complex and socially constructed. Problematising and questioning 'ethical' leadership helps to challenge traditional leaderist assumptions and cultivate a fundamental appreciation of complexity and relativity when it comes to everyday matters of ethical and immoral behaviour (Collier and Estban, 2000). Knight and O'Leary (2006) and Liu (2017) considered ethical leadership theories to be too individualistic, de-contextualistic and power-neutral, inferring that ethical leadership cannot be recognised or 'fixed' through lists of criteria that lack a grounded sense of the political and sociological construction of leadership in everyday life. This requires a re-evaluation of the role of power in leadership, as well as fostering a serious appreciation of context and cultural background. Thus, each context, sector or organisation has its own constructed leadership, which is based on many factors that assist in shaping its ethical function. Problematising this ethical function created by means of rules and procedures in each organisation can reveal counterproductive ethical meanings, or the unethical aspects found in ethical leadership. There has been a recent demand for a more critical, relational and contextual understanding of ethics and leadership (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2017), a challenge this current investigation seeks to address. However, the majority of studies in the field appear to be Western-presented (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2017), and continuing to lack any grasp of wider contexts and cultural

dynamics of the kind identified at the outset, in particular the issue of gendered leadership in Saudi HE.

Problematizing ethics and leadership practices primarily requires power relations within a specific organisation, recognising that workplace leaders practice a level of power capable of influencing their behaviour in a destructive manner (Knights and O’Leary, 2016). The following section therefore considers the need to understand this destructive practice, along with how studies in the existing literature have explored the opposing aspect of ethical leadership.

1.5 The opposite of ethical leadership

Studies focussing on the dark side of leadership generally examine the related damaging behaviours. A number of scholars, including Tepper (2000) and Bedi (2016), have examined the phenomenon of abusive leadership, in particular hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviours toward subordinates, including physical violence. This involves the abuse of power by one or more of those in authority, i.e. the public denigration or undermining of employees (Tepper, 2007). Boddy et al. (2010) viewed these self-serving practices as mirroring both narcissistic and psychopathic lines of action, being frequently found amongst those in positions of senior leadership. The authors suggested that a leader can undertake selfish and individualistic behaviour in a bid to rise to higher levels of their career (ibid). In the literature related to the concept of leadership, this abusive supervision is labelled as part of the dark side, or a negative style of leadership, which contradicts the bright side, i.e. charismatic, authentic and ethical leadership (Tepper, 2007). According to Bedi et al., (2016) ethical leadership tends to be negatively associated with abusive supervision due to ethical leaders being seen as caring for the welfare of their employees and engaging in behaviour that is honourable.

While several scholars have viewed abusive leadership through the psychological lens in order to explore notable cases of a leader’s narcissism (O’Connor, Mumford, Clifton, Gessner, & Connelly, 1995) others have maintained that abusive supervision is generally related to moral disengagement (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Ashforth (1987, 1994) referred to abusive supervision as constituting ‘petty tyranny’, linking it explicitly to a superior’s use of power “oppressively, capriciously, and perhaps vindictively” (Ashforth 1997:126). Basing his argument on the familiar Theory X orientation, he explored leaders’ beliefs concerning, and perceptions of, their subordinates.

According to McGregor (1960), Theory X encapsulates the belief that employees are primarily lazy, dislike work, resist change, and prefer directive leadership. Fiman (1973) claimed that managers advocating Theory X are perceived by their subordinates to engender a structured work environment, as well as one that is lacking in consideration, empathy and sensitivity.

Ashforth (1997) noted that tyrannical leaders are considered to be distrusting, arrogant and rigid, stating that petty tyranny tends to result in subordinates feeling restricted in their ability to take action, particularly since they are hierarchically dependent and are thus a target for tyrannical behaviours. This can lead to subordinates becoming frustrated, stressed, helpless and feeling alienated by such leader behaviour, which is therefore counterproductive when it comes to their motivation at work. Leaders, on the other hand, can perceive these tyrannical behaviours to be ethical, viewing them as concentrating the minds of unreliable underlings for the greater good. Once leaders believe in the 'assumed' reality of subordinates based on Theory X orientation, they tend to consider it as ethical to behave in this way, viewing it as being for the benefit of the organisation as a whole.

A further variation on this theme is that of toxic leadership. According to Lipman-Blumen (2005) leaders are considered toxic when they use influential tactics that harm their followers. However, such leaders can attract differing (and even contradictory) assessments, being regarded as unacceptably damaging by some, while determined and hero-like by others (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Walton (2007) stated that followers can be attracted to toxic leaders as a result of their powerful enthusiasm to secure their own objectives. The corollary is that some followers may help to shape (or at least fail to confront) such harmful leadership (Kellerman, 2004). However, Pelletier (2010) contended that the consequences of toxic leadership behaviour can exert a truly destructive impact on both subordinates and organisations, and that any endorsements are misplaced, or a product of intimidation. Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) stated that instances of workplace deviance among subordinates tend to be associated with the behaviour of toxic and abusive leaders. Furthermore, these counterproductive behaviours are likely to be attributed to negative reciprocity (Pelletier, 2010).

Destructive leadership includes behaviours such as managerial tyranny and abusive supervision. However, there is, as yet, no agreed definition of such leadership and the area lacks a settled theoretical framework (Krasikova et al., 2013; Schedlitzki and Edwards,

2018). Oppositions of ethical, good and productive behaviours show the other extreme and the dark side of leadership practices. Furthermore, they also lack a detailed appreciation of the significance of power as a relational concept, and therefore a reliable means of understanding how good may turn bad, or how good and bad behaviours may occur simultaneously. Critical leadership scholars provide a way of addressing this aspect, particularly as they take into consideration the role of power in the study of leadership.

1.6 Literature on Leadership in the Middle East

A significant number of studies exploring female leadership have been published to draw attention to gender inequality issues. Despite the advances in studying female underrepresentation in leadership roles, most of the published research is Western-based which denies the significance of cultural interpretations of women's empowerment and leadership. Beh and Kennan (2013, p. 32) state that: 'Leadership is inherently contextual/situational and cultural/national, although the search for best practices sets the stage for the integration of various culturally grounded formulations'.

In the last decade, there has been an increase in research on women and leadership in the Middle East (e.g., Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Madsen, Kemp, and Davis, 2014; Metcalfe, 2008, 2011; Sperling et al., 2014; Abdalla, 2015). The scholars mentioned here explore cultural and organizational interpretations of women in the workplace and their limited opportunities for leadership roles across the Middle East. Metcalf (2011), for instance, discusses how gender biological differences interfere with male and female social roles in an Arab context, especially in GCC countries, and therefore impinge on the authority of men as a financial source.

While current research on women's cultural barriers in the Middle East presents significant social and organizational factors for consideration such as gendered social roles and traditional gender prejudice, it overlooks local and national constructs of leadership, and their versions thereof within their own contexts and locations. For example, Saudi Arabia shares many cultural values with other Muslim and Arab countries. However, it has a unique operational setting (i.e., a segregated work environment) which unconditionally affects women's leadership roles and behaviours. Gender segregated Saudi culture has created a complex situation for women as they encounter various social restrictions, masculine and managerial pressures that influence their leadership practices. This raises ethical concerns

around potential counterproductive leadership behaviour and the need to make a space for female academics to express their views, especially with a dearth of published research in this area within the leadership literature of the Middle East.

1.7 Critical leadership studies: are they sufficiently critical?

As previously outlined, mainstream theories of ethical leadership can raise a number of issues and are deserving of critical scrutiny to reveal a more realistic picture of leadership in action within work organisations. The critical movement in leadership studies, or critical leadership studies (Collinson, 2011), focuses on leadership processes through ‘the eye of the beholder’ within particular contexts. This has been built on philosophical notions of critical management theory, in order to highlight the role of power, history and language, using mostly qualitative methods of data gathering and analysis (Learmonth and Morrell, 2016). A key purpose of critical leadership studies is to challenge leadership orthodoxy by critically exploring both the relational process and power dynamics between leaders and followers. Shifting from leader-centred, or a ‘belief in the power of one’ (Gronn, 2000:319), to relational positions (since there is more than one critical view), calls attention unequivocally to complexity and reality in organisations. An important aspect of this process is challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about, as well as overly positive views of, leadership. Critical writers, such as Fairhurst (2007) and Jackson and Parry (2008) have challenged the preoccupation with positivism and the dominance in the leader-centred accounts that treat followers as passive recipients of elite decision making. Top-down leadership (in which leaders supposedly act on followers with a directive capacity for ‘influence’ and an authoritative ability to change their vision and values) is now widely critiqued as being unhelpful and unrealistic, not least due to its ability to perpetuate simplistic and one-dimensional notions of power (Collinson, 2011; Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2017).

To this extent, critical leadership studies has effectively problematised assumptions that are individualistic, white male dominated and Western. Nonetheless, it can be argued that many critical studies still fall short of developing a detailed political lens focussing on organisational struggles concerning ethical and counterproductive leadership behaviour. They instead apply a critical approach (e.g. via post structuralism and feminism), while at the same time exploring leadership in ways that undermine fixed assumptions about executive power. However, important matters of context and culture remain too often ignored or underdeveloped, including the gendered dynamics of leadership in Arab countries.

Fairhurst (2007) and Grint (2001) offered prominent (and regularly cited) critical views on leadership as being sociologically driven to explore “the shifting possible constructions of leadership located within their complex conditions, process and consequences” (Collinson, 2011: 183). Their critical leadership studies have tended to focus on re-evaluating the power of leaders and challenging ideas of asymmetrical leader-employee power on matters of ethical and social and relational behaviour. However, applications of this approach remain narrowly focused on Western contexts. Although these tend to be most telling when it comes to their criticism of mainstream theories, as well as related spurious notions of ethical leadership, there remains considerable scope to expand the reach of this work to further countries, contexts and instances of counterproductive commentary and practice (Knight and O’Leary, 2006; Rhodes, 2015; Liu, 2017).

This current investigation examines critical leadership studies in terms of a relational understanding of power and gendered politics to establish a wider challenge to unethical and counterproductive leadership practices, as well as to assess patterns of resistance, struggle and reaction in the hitherto neglected context of Saudi HE.

1.8 Counterproductive work behaviour

Counterproductive work behaviour covers a number of different concepts, perspectives and set of behaviours, and is as vulnerable as established leadership theory concerning a critical leadership studies critique. The mainstream literature on counterproductive work behaviour (e.g. Fox and Spector, 1999) also falls short when it comes to an examination of relational sensitivity, generally reproducing a narrow (and largely disparaging) view of employees. Spector and colleagues (2006) offered a typical representation, defining counterproductive work behaviour as “intentional acts by employees that harm organisations or their stakeholders” (2006:28).

This exclusive concentration on employees reinforces elitist tendencies and encourages a view of employees requiring direction and control by more enlightened senior figures. Thus, counterproductive work behaviour is viewed as being confined to the ‘lower orders’, who are most capable of (or likely to) breach organisational norms and procedures. Applying critical thinking suggests that this ignores counterproductive work behaviour at higher levels, as well as through managerial and leader norms capable of fostering misbehaviour. Yet, as previously noted, this is also a major concern, as the counterproductive work

behaviour framework also perpetuates a view of employees as being unreliable, possibly deviant, and requiring directive interventionist leadership to perform effectively. Despite the relating of counterproductive work behaviour to the motives of workers not being in itself questionable, the underlying typology “concerns the acts being articulated in a manner that is biased towards managerialist academics and practitioners” (Richards, 2008:661). The predominant interest here is on subordinates’ oppositional conduct as the ‘irrational’ behaviour of unmotivated individuals (Collinson and Ackroyd, 2005). This denies the perception that misbehaviour is both embedded and reproduced through social interactions within an organisation, while at the same time being reinforced by social myths. Here, social and relational insights attempt to consider misbehaviour as it emerges within relationships, interactions and exchanges between leaders and followers. Therefore, the current conceptualisation of counterproductive work behaviour merits critical attention, in order to deconstruct its assumptions and ideologies and so gain a deep understanding of misbehaviour in a wider sense.

1.8.1 Challenging orthodox counterproductive work behaviour

Misbehaviour has been explored in different terms, including: (1) counterproductive behaviour (Fox and Spector, 1999); (2) workplace deviance (Robinson & Bennett 1995); (3) dysfunctional workplace behaviour (Griffin et al., 1998); (4) antisocial behaviour (Giacolone and Greenberg, 1997); (5) organisational misbehaviour (Vardi and Wiener, 1996); and (6) insidious workplace behaviour (Greenberg, 2010). The key researchers indicated here have used a variety of scales, under various different labels, to categorise counterproductive behaviours, as well as including overlapping sets of behaviours (Fox and Spector, 2005). Fox and Spector (2011:292) noted that counterproductive work behaviour covers “behaviour that is intended to have a detrimental effect on organisations and their members”. These scholars have empirically developed a typology of counterproductive work behaviour that integrates abuse, sabotage, production deviance, theft and withdrawal. This broad range of counterproductive work behaviour, commencing from low (i.e. lateness) to high (i.e. violence) constructs a workplace misbehaviour framework based on organisational norms (Collins and Griffin, 1998). It implies that, although ‘normal’ behaviour should be consistent with organisational norms, it can be considered counterproductive. Thus, individual behaviours can only be defined based on the constructed meaning of the organisational norms of what counts as productive or counterproductive.

As noted earlier, in the field of organisational behaviour, scholars such as Vardi and Wiener, (1996), Fox and Spector (1999) and Robinson and Bennett (1995) viewed misbehaviours as ‘the dark side of organisations’ (Griffin and O’Leary-Kelly, 2004). This contrasts markedly with the industrial sociology perspective, with theorists such as Thompson and Ackroyd, (1995), Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) and Collinson and Ackroyd (2005) presenting misbehaviour as consisting of ‘micro and informal class-like struggles’ (Richards, 2008). Vardi and Wiener (1996: 153) viewed organisational misbehaviour as “any intentional action by member/s of organisation/s that defies and violates (a) shared organisational norms and expectations, and/or (b) core societal values, mores and standards of proper conduct”. However, these shared organisational norms, along with the constructed standards for ‘appropriate’ behaviour, can also engender misbehaviour. These authors challenge, rather than share, ‘managerialism’, while their analyses can be seen to have wider implications for evaluating the ethical aspect of leadership, with Robinson and Bennet (1997) claiming that intentional harm, alongside evident violation of norms and standards, need to be present before managers decide on whether a course of action can count as serious misbehaviour. On the other hand, Collinson and Ackroyd (2005) argued that the main objective of this writing is to construct the ‘obedient and compliant employee’. Challenging this current mainstream view requires a shift to explore and problematise leaders’ misbehaviour.

1.8.2 The absence of leaders’ counterproductive work behaviour

Despite the attention now given to the issue of organisational misbehaviour, the vast majority of attention, as noted above, tends to be focused on employees rather than their leaders. This can be considered an aspect in need of consideration, particularly when considered in the light of the scandals also discussed above. Dysfunctionality is thus related to the behaviour of employees, in particular through absenteeism, theft or limited production. However, “there is little difference in principle between managerial and employee misbehaviour except that managers decide what is misbehaviour and what is not” (Collinson and Ackroyd, 2005:306). Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) stated that, in order to comprehend workplace misbehaviour, it is first vital to understand the primary role of management in misbehaviour, which can be extended to executives and those in formal leadership positions. This perspective challenges the traditional views of misbehaviour as taking place in situations where the performance of employees requires stricter management. Employees’ misbehaviour should not be studied using these strict and problematic insights to comply with corporate identity (Richard, 2008). Instead, managers’ misbehaviour needs to be

explored through an understanding how societal forces can shape such actions along with the process of control in workplace.

Edwards and Scullion (1982) examined the connection between managerial control and misbehaviour, concluding that certain procedures of managerial control in workplace tend to be accompanied by specific forms of misbehaviours. Furthermore, Ackroyd and Thompson, (1999:93) stated that: “by such processes regimes of control can become routinised and typical patterns of misbehaviour become recurrent and endemic”. Moreover, LaNuez and Jermier (1994) believed that key societal and organisational rules have acted to construct a number of advantages for managers that potentially result in a willingness to misbehave. This industrial sociology perspective builds arguments based on the theory of Labour Process (LP) which focuses mainly on managerial control. However, this view pays little attention to the relational aspect of counterproductive work behaviour as it emerges within the dynamics of relationships. Behaviour in workplace is not only an outcome of forced power but is also a “product of relationship – albeit unequal” (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999). Understanding managers’ counterproductive behaviour requires additional investigation into their ‘productive’ efforts to meet organisational effectiveness and expectations through the ‘counterproductive’ struggle of their relationships with subordinates.

1.9 Why power matters

Theories concerning the issue of power within organisations tend to differ according to their relevance to leadership. Most discussions relating leadership to the issue of power equate it with the question of ‘influence’, specifically the ability to shape the thinking and behaviour of followers. It appears that, in mainstream literature, leadership and power are viewed as being identical, as well as generally a positive quality of positional authority. For example, Yukl (2010) explored the positive and proactive influencing tactics assisting superiors to motivate others, i.e. persuasive communication, and inspirational and personal appeals. He differentiated these proactive tactics from those of political and decision-making tactics, although the explanation is individualistic and leader-centred. It thus fuses power with hierarchal positions, while ignoring countervailing power arising from other levels and actors. Jackson and Parry (2011:96) stated that a critical assessment of this equation notes that power has “its legitimacy sanctioned through the hierarchy and rules within an organisation and exemplified by their leadership roles”. This political lens on power has

been influenced by the influential critical work of Lukes (2005), which requires a relational aspect to be consistent with the relational lines of analysis developed earlier in this chapter.

Lukes (2005) explored the question of power by means of three main dimensions: firstly, behavioural, secondly, decision-making and thirdly, institutional. Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan (1998) noted that power can be observed in some instances, while remaining covert in others. Applications of power can be witnessed in relation to the explicit differences between leaders and workers, particularly when it comes to conflict situations, as well as the dichotomy between the demands of superiors and those that are rejected by their subordinates. However, covert applications of power are generally more subtle (although no less damaging to employees) when applied by their leaders and managers:

On the surface, power is exercised through the mobilisation of scarce critical resources, and through the control of the decision-making process. At a deeper level, power is exercised by managing the meaning that shapes others' lives. Deeper still, is the suggestion that power is embedded in the very fabric of the system; it constrains how we see, what we see, and how we think, in ways that limit our capacity for resistance. (Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998:460)

However, while acknowledging the complexities inherent within the role of power (which can be multi-layered in organisations), this perspective is too institutional and ignores relational realities. Thus, it tends to normalise (rather than problematise) the issue of power asymmetry between leaders and followers (Gordon, 2011). Power is not allocated on an asymmetrical basis, even when leader groups appear to have the ability to command authority and shape the established notions of ethical behaviour within organisations. Hindess (1982) and Beirne (2013) noted that those on the receiving end of 'power plays' by senior figures are rarely (or ever) helpless or powerless and are frequently adept at finding means of resisting. While the dimensions of control outlined by Lukes (2005) present a more worrying picture of abusive power and counterproductive work behaviour among executives, it also neglects the interrelated nature of power, as well as the significance of relational interdependencies within organisational life. Executive power and formal authority are, of themselves, insufficient to deliver employee compliance or prevent workplace struggles against accusations of unethical and counterproductive behaviour, either from, or in opposition to, formal leaders (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2018). Thus, the Lukesian image of leaders and managers possessing total control over employees, to the

extent of setting, enforcing and exemplifying appropriate ethical standards, tends to prove inadequate.

Relational power can be seen to shape social relations at work, while also playing a crucial role in working out what constitutes ethical behaviour, even to the point of recasting it as counterproductive. Collinson (2011:184) argued that “power relations are always two-way, contingent and to some degree interdependent. Since power relations are always two-way, leaders remain dependent on the interpretation and reactions of the led. Followers retain a degree of autonomy and discretion”. This implies that subordinates are not completely powerless and power relations are not fixed (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2018). This relational understanding adds contestation to the understanding of leadership, ethics and counterproductive behaviour (Hosking, 2011). Power is thus co-constructed by social actors in relation to particular social and cultural contexts impacting on how they communicate and relate to each other, as well as the way they react. Situating this conceptualisation of power within more detailed and differentiated accounts of context, communities and cultures, can offer a way forward for understanding the tensions related to ethics, leadership and damaging behaviour.

1.10 Towards a dialectical approach

The various threads within this analysis can be pulled together and applied by means of dialectics. A dialectical approach highlights multiple opposing tendencies, contradictory forces and ambiguities, in order to build a picture of unfolding relations. Historically speaking, dialectical thinking has formed a major aspect of classic philosophy, including Plato, Socrates and Aristotle, as well as social scientists such as Hegel, Marx and Weber. However, much of the value attached to dialectical insights, tension and oppositions has been lost in response to the growth of scientific management and the certainties of managerialism in the twentieth century (Collinson, 2019). More recently, a number of leadership studies have developed an interest in dialectical analysis. Fairhurst (2001) examined ‘dynamics tensions’ as a means of exploring leaders’ practices through collective understanding, rather than creating leader/follower binaries. Collinson (2005, 2011, 2019, 2020) investigated the interrelated dialectics of power relations, i.e. control/resistance, dissent/consent and men/women. Collinson (2019:274) stated that, based on the asymmetrical nature of power in organisations: “leaders exercise considerable control, enjoy considerable privilege, and their power and status can have contradictory and ambiguous outcomes, which leaders either do not always understand, or of which they are unaware”.

The dialectal approach is applied in this current thesis with the aim of broadening the boundaries of the ethical/counterproductive understanding of leadership. This requires addressing the gap in the current literature and problematising the dichotomy of ethical leadership theory and the counterproductive work behaviour framework. In addition, it explores the interrelated dialectics of ethical/counterproductive leadership behaviour, in particular those illustrated empirically within a specific context. Setting out a dialectical view of this dichotomy can clarify a far broader spectrum of ethical leadership practices beyond those of fixed virtues and individualistic behaviour, i.e. establishing that power has an impact on leaders' practices within certain organisations and is framed in different forms. Collinson (2019:267) noted that, within the dialectical lens, "power is central.... It is not so much as 'defendant variable' as it is a deeply embedded and inescapable feature of leadership structures, cultures, relations and practices". This infers that leaders tend to practice power rooted within their own positions and roles, as well as their organisational structure and cultural norms. A recognition of the exercise of gendered power while exploring leadership practices and behaviour is significant, in particularly when taking into consideration the fact that "gender continues to be a key dynamic through which leadership power is enacted" (Collinson, 2019:268). This is particularly so as workplaces are "sites for the reproduction of men's power and status" (ibid).

Taking the above assumptions into consideration, ethical leadership can be identified as a complex process. Leadership forms a social practice, being governed by social and relational ethics, with the former being primarily violated within power relations. This power can impact on leadership practices in ways that are both constructive and destructive. Within the social dynamics of the workplace, power engenders behaviours in leaders capable of being ethically questioned, particularly by subordinates. Those leaders who exercise power are supported by institutional values to behave in a manner that is considered 'ethical' and to manage the work behaviour of their subordinates. However, the behaviours of leaders and the reactions of employees, along with the ethical consequences, can prove contradictory. Actions deemed the 'productive' behaviour of leaders can also be perceived as 'counterproductive' by followers.

1.11 Research Gap

An initial review of the relevant literature on ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviours in the previous sections reveals its limitations and highlights important gaps in the research. On the one hand, ethical leadership theories (e.g. Brown et al., 2005; Brown and Trevino, 2006; Ciulla, 2004; Ciulla and Forsyth, 2011) offer an individualistic and leader-centred perspective on what makes a leader behave in ethical ways. However, scholars such as Liu (2017) and Knight and O’Leary (2006) criticize mainstream ethical leadership research for its abstract view which ignores the role of power relations in the workplace.

On the other hand, counterproductive work behaviour theory (i.e., Vardi and Wiener, 1996; Fox and Spector, 1999; Spector et al., 2006; Robinson and Bennett, 1995) tends to focus on employees’ misconduct. That of managers, however, must be studied within the bounds of its social and cultural contexts. Taking into consideration its gendered context and the masculine and patriarchal culture of HE and leadership in Saudi Arabia, current studies deflect attention from these important dimensions, and even exhibit a disinclination to explore the co-construction of ethical and counterproductive leadership debates, instead reinforcing the social conditions of leaders’ practices.

1.12 Summary

This chapter has offered a critical assessment of the opposing tendencies of ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviour conceptualisations. It has concluded that, while mainstream studies can shed light on the role of ethics in leadership practices, the focus tends to be too leader-centric and over preoccupied with moral and ethical (i.e. individualistic) traits. This trend can be critiqued as being overgeneralised and simplistic when it comes to real-life organisational practices. counterproductive work behaviour theory is framed in terms of fixed typology and lists of employees’ harmful behaviours. However, there remains a clear tendency to ignore leaders’ counterproductive practices and any resulting harmful impact on employees and organisations. This requires a greater appreciation of the role of asymmetrical relational power, along with its focus on the dynamic tensions between leaders and followers in the workplace. A dialectical approach is needed to challenge leader/follower and ethical/counterproductive oppositional notions, in order to demonstrate the

interconnectedness of these contradictory practices within leadership and followership processes.

This chapter has also explored the debates concerning ethical and counterproductive behaviour, by highlighting the complexity, contradictions and paradoxes between ethical and counterproductive practices. Having now identified these gaps, Chapter Two examines the way ethical/counterproductive leadership dialectics are shaped and reproduced by gender and culture, particularly in the context of Saudi HE.

Chapter Two

A dialectical exploration of ethical and counterproductive leadership: the context of Saudi gender segregated higher education

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter identified a number of significant gaps within the established literature concerning the issue of ethical leadership and counterproductive behaviour. It argued that a critical and dialectical approach is capable of providing the basis for a more telling research route into matters of ethical and counterproductive leadership. Collinson (2020) outlined the future direction of debate when it comes to the dialectical approach, calling for further studies to consider multiple forms of power when studying leadership behaviour. Chapter Two extends this argument and provides an initial exploration of the embodied interrelated dialectics of organisational values, structure, gender and culture within the context of the Saudi HE sector. As discussed in the previous chapter, power can stimulate both ethical and counterproductive practices. This chapter focuses on how gender, cultural and institutional embodiment can utilise multiple and interrelated forms of power in order to generate leadership practices in Saudi HE that can be both ethical and oppressive.

The first part of this chapter examines the organisational forms of power and reviews studies focusing on HE and leadership, highlighting the related institutional power and leadership practices. This includes a clear analysis of managerialism, hierarchal structures and quality assurance requirements. The second part of this chapter then explores the gendered aspects of HE leadership. It reveals the masculinised construction of HE intuitions and explores the impact of this factor on gendered leadership practices, notably paternalism. The final section reviews the fusion of prevailing cultural and leadership features, as well as processes, within the Saudi HE context. It explores the uniqueness of the Saudi gendered leadership approach, as well as segregated HE as a distinctive context to be studied in relation to critical leadership.

2.2 Higher education and ethical leadership

The established literature examining HE leadership and ethics is distinguished by a strong attachment to neo-liberalising improvements, as well as a preoccupation with the impact of these outcomes on developed countries since the 1980s (Parker and Jary, 1995; Pollitt, 1995; Harley, 2002; Clarke and Knight, 2015; Thornoton et al., 2018). This has established public sector leadership in organisations such as HEIs and schools as being consistently shaped by

preoccupations with market mechanisms, organisational restructuring and fixed principles of accountability and responsibility (O'Reilly and Reed 2010, 2011; Marginson and Considine, 2000).

Universities globally are currently dealing with neo-liberal values of privatisation and the professionalism of academia (Lorenz, 2012), which have pushed reform agendas and leadership propensities to apply managerialist practices including: “competition, performance incentives, league tables, targets and surveillance” (Clarke and Knight, 2015:86). According to O'Reilly and Reed (2010:960), “‘managerialism’ and ‘leaderism’ represent a “set of beliefs that frames and justifies certain innovatory changes in contemporary organisational and managerial practice”. Leaderism thus focuses on how leaders perceive themselves as rational agents of change who ‘promote’ their moral qualities to exercise functionalist managerial practices (Currie and Lockett, 2007; Bresnen et al., 2015). While existing studies have focused on problematising the ethical issues related to leadership in terms of conflict in public and administrative values, few researchers have explicitly connected this to the question of unethical leadership practices and arguments for social justice within the workplace, or in contexts that are both highly gendered and culturally conservative. As previously noted, this current thesis addresses this aspect by means of an in-depth examination of Saudi Arabian HE sectors, in which similar patterns of leaderism and managerialism have, in recent decades, been informed by developments in the West. This needs to be explored through three main sources of institutional power found within HE organisations: (1) managerialism; (2) structuration; and (3) the demands related to quality assurance.

2.2.1 Managerialism

Globally speaking, managerial power remains central to an exploration of ethics within HE leadership processes, particularly since leaders are frequently involved with political conduct and interventions related to change within universities. Traditional assumptions concerning the value of universities being run through collegial process led by scholars as ‘academic leaders’ have been questioned for some time, particularly since the emphasis on ‘new managerialism’ in a broad range of countries during the 1980s and 1990s (Deem, 1998). Painter (2011) claimed that “managerialism is a belief system that highlights the role of management and managers in providing solutions to social and economic problems” (Painter, 2011:237). A number of scholars have termed this New Public Management (NPM). Newman (2011:349) noted that: “NPM is a shorthand term used to describe the rise

of managerialism in the context of attempts to reform public services through the 1990s and beyond”.

Managerialist notions of good governance and appropriate ethical fortitude are grounded in performance-based standards legitimising the application of directive controls on academics’ performance (Farazmand, 2017). This assumes that such ‘managed’ academics can be expected to absorb these top-granted standards and exhibit a greater commitment to their students and employers as a direct response to their leaders’ fostering of competition, including through the strategy of firstly, rating their teaching and publications and secondly, by connecting marketised measures of their output to highly formalised annual appraisals and promotion procedures (Deem, 1998:50). This managerialist movement can be traced back to Taylorism and the ‘scientific management’ principles devised by Fredrick Taylor (1911) at the turn of the twentieth century (Iszatt-White and Saunders, 2014). Taylorism developed a number of ‘best practice’ values, which subsequently informed the wholesale standardisation of work, as part of a widespread ideological drive to increase both efficiency and production. These were subsequently imported into HE (ibid), so contradicting traditional principles of public service and administration, which had prioritised professional autonomy, claiming that this move was conducive to serving the public interest and ensuring equal treatment (Farazmand, 2017). This transformation resulted in many university leaders becoming preoccupied with short term goals and interventions aimed at forcing academics to embrace the values of efficiency and economy. This was generally accomplished by means of governance changes and the installation of managerial regimes legitimising the power of leadership to set rules, allocate responsibilities, and also reward and punish (Jackson and Parry, 2011).

Managerialism and leaderism generates management performance techniques influencing leaders’ practices based on rationalistic controls and neoliberal values. Consequently, leaders in many universities throughout the world have rigorously enforced tighter productivity standards on academic communities, frequently attracting strongly negative reactions and conflictual patterns of employee relations (Deem and Hillyard, 2001). Nonetheless, many leaders continue to consider themselves as ethical, providing ‘transformational leadership’ and fundamentally modernising their institutions for the greater good: “‘New managerialism’, if it exists in universities, is likely to place considerable pressure on roles and individuals, especially where the tensions between the logic of managerial control and the conventions of professional autonomy become especially acute”

(Deem, 1998:63). This tension is not immediately clear in leaders' 'ethical' views and practices, as they can exhibit driven behaviour in order to control academics, including their productivity and general approach, with Deem (1998: 66) noting that: “‘new managerialism’ (makes) concerted attempts to control both academic performances and organisational cultures, as well as the more easily changed organisational structures”. This aspect has been widely studied and reported in various media accounts of industrial relations difficulties within HE, despite the lack of development of an understanding of related structural changes and the ways leaderism has translated to differing cultural contexts.

2.2.2 Hierarchical structuring in higher education

Hierarchical structures are central to the construction of leadership and shaping the behaviour of leaders within workplaces. Early literature focussing on structures and power (i.e. Whyte, 1956; Ewing, 1977) demonstrated that 'organisational men' need to be loyal to the agenda of those at the top of organisational hierarchies. Ewing (1977:87) stated that: “for all practical purposes, employees are required to be ... obedient to their superiors, regardless of ethical and legal considerations”. This top-down structuring of public sector organisations tends to be benevolently associated with centralisation and bureaucratic control (Thompson et al., 2003), alongside a supportive system of administrative ethics, which are now widely challenged. Cooper (1998, 2003) noted that:

We have had evidence that organisational structure and culture are not neutral with respect to ethical conduct. Our typical hierarchical bureaucratic organisations generally not only have failed to encourage ethical action by the people who work within them, but often have created serious impediments to their efforts to do the right thing. (Cooper, 2003:398)

Organisational ethics in the public sector operate by means of fixed standards, regulations, guidelines and procedures supported by means of rigid hierarchical structures (Farazmand, 2017). These are formed largely by elites at the top of university structures, who have a tendency to act to protect their 'centralised' authority and control over leadership processes.

Such top-down structures enable formal leaders to attempt to shape the decision making of collegial or departmental managers, requiring conformity through their directives and guidelines. Authors such as Milgrom and Robert (1992) and Vandenberghe (1999) have claimed that central control by means of top-down structures can prove effective in a

complex system, particularly when it comes to education management, where senior leaders carry accountability for the affairs of institutions. However, a number of further scholars, including Marris (1975) and Pascale (1990), have argued that centralised power represents the ideas, concerns and policies of a specific elite in their attempt to manipulate others. This acknowledges the potential for resistance and the difficulty for leaders in securing their desired outcomes. However, at the same time, the centralisation of decisions and curricula plans indicate that immense pressure can be exerted by leaders, who have a substantial (if not entirely uncontested) power over academics (Davies, 2002).

Top leaders in hierarchical and centralised-authority organisations, such as those now prominent in HE, create procedures which some expect to be ethically guaranteed. This poses several questions regarding concerns related to the concept of a ‘shared’ vision between leaders and academics. Leaders within ‘middle management’ (e.g. at collegial, school or department levels) may not be equally engaged with the factor termed by Bennett (1995) as the “downward flow of authority from the leader, given in order to promote what the leader seeks” (Bennett, 1995:18). Briggs (2001) stated that collegial leaders encounter ‘role conflict’ when attempting to fulfil managerial and bureaucratic standards handed down from seniors, and when exercising their own authority and autonomy in a responsible manner. However, questions need to be raised concerning the extent to which this ‘positional power’ influences firstly, leaders’ practices and secondly, the ethical standing of their employing organisations. Furthermore, it poses the question of whether this has a bearing upon leaders’ ethical conduct, or has the ability to exacerbate the tensions noted above, including the potential violation of human and social values, i.e. academic freedom, fairness and equal representation.

2.2.3 Quality assurance and effective leadership

As indicated earlier, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, universities took clear steps to establish quality assurance systems believed by various commentators and political regimes to enhance the quality of learning outcome for students, in particular in relation to research and institutional credibility (Dill and Beekens, 2010). Su (2013:17) noted that: “countries around the world established and improved quality assurance systems for higher education with the hope of improving the quality of higher education in their countries or regions” Quality measurements formed a central element of this movement, being in many cases the main instrument concentrating the minds of those academics and traditionalists expressing reservations or actively opposing this approach.

With scientific measurement tools and techniques, we are able to turn ‘quality’, a concept that people often think is difficult to measure, into an operable practical process, and then adopt appropriate policies and measures to improve the daily practice of teaching and management of an institution. (Yingqiang et al., 2016:10)

However, scholars such as Clarck (1989), Grelland (2011) and Zhang (2012) offered more critical explorations of quality assurance. Grelland (2011: 34) stated that “quality clichés attribute notions of control, accountability and a shift of responsibility towards the organisation, rather than depending on the individual performances of employees. Similarly, Zhang (2012) highlighted the increase of the role of managers when it comes to following quality criteria primarily focussing on the appraisal of academics, so turning them into ‘managed professionals’. According to Cardoso et al. (2016:952) academics’ perceptions of “quality assurance is an imposition and prescription; has a highly bureaucratic character; is not aligned with the ‘academic endeavour’”.

A clash of interests in relation to quality standards between institutional managers and academics tends to create tensions. While leaders mostly follow policies and procedures in order to meet a demand for organisational effectiveness, they tend to hinder academic freedom, instead focusing on productivity. The increased demands for academic performance from HE leadership to achieve quality assurance thus demand additional need empirical studies to discuss the ethical consequences for academics.

2.3 The patriarchal fabric of higher education institutions: paternalism

Studies into the question of gender and HE leadership have frequently explored women’s representation in leadership positions. As noted by Skjortnes and Zachariassen (2010) there appears to be only limited research focusing on the gendered nature of university leadership in general, which therefore requires further examination. According to Odhiambo (2011:667): “A discussion of gender and higher education leadership is important, because higher education is a major site of cultural practice, identity formation and symbolic control”. Blackmore (2002) suggested that HEIs tend to engender a patriarchal environment that reproduces barriers for women when it comes to attaining leadership positions.

Ethical issues related to leadership and gender in HE research are frequently concerned with gender inequality, given that men continue to dominate senior positions in universities.

Alvesson and Billing (1997) and Collinson and Hearn (1996) emphasised the importance of exploring gender relationships in relation to organisational function (whether leaders are men or women), in order to understand such behaviour. According to Wilson (2018: 6) “gender is not only about women, but also about men; both men and women play out gendered roles, and exhibit gendered behaviours”. Although gender is constructed and embedded by means of its continuous evolving of societal and organisational contexts, organisations are generally viewed as retaining male dominance by means of masculine practices (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993). Alvesson (1998:972) described masculinity as “values, experiences and meanings that are ascribed to men more than women in the particular cultural context”. In addition, Priola (2007) noted that shifting approaches of masculinity in HE leadership toward entrepreneurial and managerial contexts can construct further aggressive leadership practices.

The processes of re-gendering, or of re-masculinisation, reproduces institutional patriarchal practices (i.e. paternalism), which contribute to gendered power relations (Collinson and Hearn, 1994). Gelfand, Erez, and Aycan (2007) defined paternalism as a “hierarchical relationship in which a leader guides the professional and personal lives of subordinates in a manner resembling a parent, and in exchange expects loyalty and deference” (2007:493). Some prescriptive studies into paternalistic leadership appear to have concluded a need for managers to behave like father figures in organisations and to have the authority to ‘create’ a collective culture within organisation similar to that of a family (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008). These studies, however, neglect power relations that shed light on problematising leadership practices. Uhl-Bien and Maslyn (2005: 1) referred to paternalistic leadership as “problematic and undesirable”. These paternalistic masculine practices generally produce gendered power in organisations based on a ‘moral basis’ and justified as demonstrating the “protective nature of their authority” (Collinson et al., 1994:13). Paternalism employs the “presence of equality for the purpose of securing instrumental gain” (Kerfoot and Knights 1993:670). These ‘fatherly’ practices thus construct gendered authority within the constraint of the requirement to benefit and protect subordinates (Collinson et al., 1994). However, most patriarchal HE leadership and paternalism studies are explored in terms of a Western university setting, indicating the need for additional in-depth research into further forms of paternalistic leadership practices. More research is needed to unpack the added complexity of cultural concerns and ethically ambiguous masculine leadership practices, particularly within gender segregated contexts, i.e. Saudi HE.

2.4 Leadership and culture

Studies of leadership in general, and ethical leadership in particular, can be seen, in the main, to disregard the process of leadership as a cultural movement. As already outlined in the previous chapters and sections, a number of critics of contemporary issues in leadership research have shown that mainstream studies tend to be Western-centric. As a counterweight to this, a number of critical scholars have recognised leadership as a socially constructed process, one that reflects and reveals national and societal values and contextual conditions.

A number of different approaches have recently appeared in the literature, forming two ends of the spectrum when it comes to studying leadership and culture, i.e. the etic and the emic (Schedlitzki, 2017).

Etic researchers (including, most famously, Hofstede (1980)), exerted a considerable influence during the late 20th century, dominating much of the work on cross-culture models of leadership and organisational behaviour, with ever larger numbers of variables employed in relation to categories and differentiated cultures, countries and communities. Hofstede's (1980) key cultural dimensions (i.e. power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term/short-term orientation) informed numerous accounts of differences between cultures and effective styles of contextual leadership (Guthey and Jackson, 2011). Hofstede's framework has been extensively critiqued and viewed as 'sophisticated stereotyping' (Osland et al., 2000:86), particularly as it is "based on theoretical concepts and lacks the negative attributions often associated with its lower-level counterpart. Nevertheless, it is limiting in the way it constrains perceptions of behaviour in another culture". Similarly, the Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) project explored 62 societies in order to identify differences between leadership practices. While these studies represent a major contribution to the field of cross-cultural leadership, many scholars have criticised them as being reliant upon simplistic measures of culture (Schedlitzki, 2017). Graen (2006:95) described the results of GLOBE's study as "a large number of one-shot, self-reported, culturally biased survey studies". According to Graen "the approach overdetermines the results by ignoring the variation within countries" (2006:96).

Emic research, on the other hand, explores leadership from the perspective of natives of the local culture (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2018). As a reaction to the limitations of etic studies, the emic approach explores culture from anthropological and sociological perspectives, and

recognises individual interpretations of its meaning (Schedlitzki, 2017). According to Alvesson (2011), the study of leadership requires a detailed exploration of local cultural understandings, including the forms of values and belief norms. However, when considering both the etic and emic exploration of leadership and culture, it has to be recognised that the appreciation of social and cultural constructions of ethical leadership behaviour remains in its infancy. Drawing on previous points concerning the dialectical exploration of leadership, cultural interpretations of power and contextual influences reveal beneficial means of positioning and understanding the complexity of the behaviour seen in both ethical and counterproductive leaders. Thus, ethical meaning making can be considered to be embedded in the contextual and historical roots that engender differing forms of leaders' behaviour, which are rationalised within its common collective sense-making. According to (Elenkove et al., 2005: 59) "people from different cultures may have different ideas and expectations about the nature of leaders and leadership".

Nonetheless, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to the exploration of issues concerning ethical leadership through a critical dialectical lens, as well as appreciating culture and gender as forming interrelated dimensions of power that socially construct leadership behaviour. Within historical and cultural exploration of ethics, gender and leadership "we have to keep asking hard questions about who or what is to blame for the problems that particular women face" (Abu-Lughod, 2013:16). Narrowing the focus to Saudi HE reveals the existence of very few studies that shed light on gender segregated contexts of the kind outlined and initially reviewed in the following section.

2.5 The context of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is widely credited as having been founded by King Abdul Aziz Al-Saudi in 1932, and is thus considered to be relatively young. The late king unified the country, transforming it into a modern kingdom, with members of various independent and unsettled tribes coming together under the rule of an 'autocratic monarchy' (Pool, 2005:295). The country is located between Africa and Asia and covers the majority of the Arabian Peninsula, consisting of approximately 1,960,582 square kilometres (Hamdan, 2005). It is currently ruled by King Salman Bin Abdul Al-Aziz. In addition, it is revered land of the two holy mosques, and the direction to which Muslim people turn towards in prayer each day.

The country is the largest of the six Gulf countries, which also include the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain. It has thirteen provinces, and is divided into central, western, eastern, southern, and northern regions. As of 2020, the population of Saudi Arabia was approximately 35 million, including 5.8 million foreigners. The Saudi population consists of 10.6 million male nationals and approximately 10.2 million female Saudi nationals. The official language is Arabic, and the official religion is Islam, with a Sunni majority (Saudi Arabia Information Resource, 2020). The Kingdom plays an important role as a global centre, of Islam due to the geographical location of the two holy mosques, as well as being a vital global distributor of oil (Mundi, 2012; Abaker et al., 2019).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia thus forms the largest and arguably most influential country in the Middle East. As noted, with its unique religious and cultural location, Saudi Arabia is referred to as the home of Islam, containing as it does the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. Energy wealth has maintained its global importance, with the oil industry dominating Saudi's economy. Politically speaking, Saudi Arabia is ruled by a monarchy founded in *Sharia* (i.e. Islamic religious) law. It has a visible cultural complexity, with religion and tradition touching every aspect of life and creating constant social and cultural influences on the inhabitants' mindset and behaviours, especially at work (Mimouni and Metcalf, 2011). The religious and tribal elites of the Kingdom have exerted considerable influence on its socio-cultural and legal values (Thompson, 2014). Saudi society is patriarchal, with the social structures reflecting strong ties to tribe and extended family (Al-Rumaihi, 2008). Despite Saudi efforts to promote modernity, tribal patterns and behaviours can still be found in many daily social dynamics (Maisel, 2013). The tribal system takes the form of a hierarchal and male-dominated structure, controlled by male tribal leaders who are mainly supported by male tribal members to maintain their privileges over women belonging to the same tribe (Willoughby, 2011).

Saudi culture is a mixture of religious values and traditional norms, which makes it both complex and unique (Alsaggaf, 2004). Alsaggaf (2004:1) claimed that this mixture "defin(es) the culture and acts as a major force in determining the social norms, patterns, traditions, obligations, privileges and practices of society" (Alsaggaf, 2004:1). The complex combination of religion and tradition results in Saudi culture being considered to be highly conservative in nature, and so resistant to change (Nydell, 2006).

The patriarchal essence of the Saudi societal system is constructed on the concept of male guardianship, which infers that each Saudi woman requires a male guardian with the authority to judge and act on her behalf when it comes to major decisions in her life, such as marriage, travel and occupation. The male guardian tends to be a family member (i.e. a father, brother, husband or son), who takes this responsibility regardless of his age, social, or economic level (Al-Kayed, 2015; Al-Asfour et al., 2014). Metcalfe and Mimoni (2011) considered male guardianship to be a major barrier to Saudi women's progress and professional advancement.

In addition, the patriarchal tribal and religious nature of the Saudi context has constructed a gender segregation system, with any mixing between men and women in public areas being traditionally discouraged. Al-Rasheed (2013) stated that Wahhabism produced gender segregation, which was misinterpreted as belonging to Islam. Wahhabist ideologies are typically traced back to or attributed to Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahab, a religious scholar of the early 18th century who prohibited *ikhtilat*, that is the mixing of men and women in public places, apart from relatives. One of the main results of Wahhabism in the 1980s was the reinforcement of gender segregation, supported by Bedouin tribal leaders as being rooted in Saudi socio-cultural constructions (Meijer, 2010). As noted by Meijer (2010:81). "Gender segregation in schools, universities, charitable organisations, restaurants, government offices and other public spaces is one of the defining features of Saudi Arabia". Wahabis' beliefs were justified as the moral protection of a family's *sharf* (honour), protecting women from *fitna* (temptation) and *zena* (adultery) (Doumato, 1992; Al-Hariri, 1987). The majority of Saudis believe that *ikhtilat* is forbidden, as Saudi Islamic scholar Abdul Azaiz bin Baz, who was a grand *mufti* (legal scholar) declared a *fatwa* (an official ruling issued by a mufti and an Islamic court) supporting segregation between men and women (Merijier, 2010).

The consequences of segregation exert a considerable impact on the socio-cultural dynamics of Saudi society, particularly on women, who are not permitted to appear publicly without wearing a *hijab* (veil) and an *abaya* (long overcoat) to maintain *al-hishma* (modesty). However, the question of women's rights in Saudi Arabia is one of the most controversial and frequently discussed issues between conservative and liberal groups (Hamdan, 2005). Apart from progressive groups, traditionalist and conservative Saudis agree that *ulema* (Islamic sharia scholars) have the power to decide what is religiously acceptable. Doumato (2010) noted that:

A healthy majority of Saudi citizens agree with the social agenda of the *ulema* and would not view the inequalities between men and women as discrimination, but as equivalent – a balance between the rights and duties of men and women as prescribed in Islam and necessary to uphold honour and family values. Doumato (2010:425).

The status of Saudi women is considered to be complex, including the need to overcome several social restrictions, as they “enjoy fewer legal rights than any other women in any country in the world” (Coleman, 2010:205). The issue has become the key conflict area between conservatives and progressives, who argue and support their subjective interpretations of the relevant material found in the *Quran* (holy book). According to Desphande (2001):

Of all the other Middle Eastern countries, Saudi Arabia has always been the most conservative. The women in this country have been the most guarded. The law has always been the most severe and has placed the most limits on women. (Desphande, 2001:193-194)

This discrimination against Saudi women has primarily been constructed through a misinterpretation of the Quran, with no basis in Islamic principles (Metcalf, 2010; Abu-Lughod, 2013; Alhareth et al., 2015; Alkadry, 2002). A clear symbol of patriarchal discrimination against women in the Kingdom was the prohibition on Saudi women driving cars until June 2018, when King Salman officially allowed them to drive.

However, the announcement of the Kingdom’s Vision 2030 by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman created optimism, and the prospect of a significant change in the lives of Saudi women. A major goal of Vision 2030 is to offer equal opportunities for all Saudis, including strengthening the contribution of women, socially, economically and legally (Vision 2030, 2020). Recent developments in Saudi society and lifestyle in response to Vision 2030 has created opportunities for a number of progressive social dynamics, including on employment and workplace participation. Over the previous decade, Saudi women have participated in the progress of their social and professional contribution to the country. Jamjoom and Kelly (2013) clarified the growth of Saudi women’s capabilities and empowerment to face a new era of change:

The rise of Saudi women as a social power is considered across Arab society to be the most vital among social changes currently taking place. About 30 years ago, it was possible to describe Saudi Arabia as ‘the society of men’ because men monopolised professional work, as well as all kinds of political, economic and social authority. But now this image has started to change and women are carrying out important roles across all of these spheres. There are female doctors, female university lecturers and professors and female businesswomen. Today’s Saudi women work in scientific laboratories, in the press and other media and in factories. (Jamjoom and Kelly (2013:118).

2.5.1 Saudi culture and gender equality

As discussed above, Saudi legitimacy is based on *Sharia* law, constructed on the main source of the *Quran* and *Sunnah*, which emphasise the primary role of religious institutions in the governance of the Kingdom (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013; Rajkhan, 2014). As also previously noted, religious extremists and their *Quranic* misinterpretations have created a barrier to women’s right to equality (Shah, 2010), despite the explicit statement in the Quran that women and men have equal rights:

Women too have rights over men similar to the rights of men over women. (al-Qur’an, 2:228).

Mtango (2004) stated that:

Women in Saudi Arabia can be seen to be in a position subservient to men, as restrictions are strictly applied. These restrictions are often explained by reference to Islamic requirements, but the *Quran* and other sources of Islamic law do not necessarily support the interpretations of the law the Saudi authorities apply. (Mtango, 2004:49)

Gender equality in Saudi Arabia has now formed the central issue of several studies (e.g. Al-Rasheed, 2010; Prfanter et al., 2014; Metcalfe, 2010). Prior to the rule of King Abdullah (2005-2015), Saudi women were, unlike men, excluded from participation in the process of decision making and contribution to society (Rajkhan, 2014). This was endorsed by religious teaching and traditional norms, supported by government policies that forced Saudi females into the position of being dependents and second-class citizens (Al-Heiss, 2012). The

patriarchal essence of Saudi culture has even encouraged extremists and conservatives to silence female voices and maintain gender segregation for the privilege of men (Le Renard, 2008). According to this traditional mentality, a woman is required to focus on her domestic role, being mainly that of a wife and mother, taking care of her husband and children (Meijer, 2010). In the case of divorce, conservatives insist on male custody of the children, despite this denying Islamic principles (Meijer, 2010).

These inadequate rights for women in Saudi Arabia have been historically nurtured by religious and tribal elites, in order to maintain male authority and female dependency. Moghadam (2003 :6-7) clarified how patriarchal authority upholds the subordination of women, beginning with her family: “the senior man has authority over everyone else in the family, including younger men, and women are subject to distinct forms of control and subordination”. To limit women’s opportunity for equality, Saudi traditions reinforce gender separation in order to protect the family *sharf* (honour) and prevent any shameful behaviour on the part of the woman (Al-Munajjed, 2010). This is justified by conservatives as a sacred demand to worship *Allah* and viewing *ikhtilat* as a prohibited and sinful practice. Here, restrictions on Saudi women’s movement are confirmed by religious ideologies, supported by the male figures in their family, to strictly prevent or oppose any change. In addition, until 2001, a Saudi woman was considered as a dependent of her male guardian, having no individual or personal national card identification (ID card), only appearing or being recognised as part of their family’s card. Furthermore, her guardianship was handed over from her father or brother to her husband (Hamdan, 2005). Hamdan (2005) stated:

A woman’s identity first appears in relation to her father’s family’s identity card. Later, if she marries, she will be added to her husband’s card or, in the case of her father’s death, to that of her nearest male kin. In Saudi society in general, it is believed that the role of women was basic to maintaining the structure of the family and therefore of society. (Hamdan, 2005:45)

The Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia (*Shoura*) was male dominated until September 2011, when King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz declared the ability of women to participate in *shoura*, including to vote and pursue municipal elections. Under the leadership of King Abdullah, the government has focused on modernising Saudi society and empowering women’s contributions (Islam, 2014). According to the Islamic feminist scholar professor Fawziah al-Baker (2010): “King Abdullah has a strategy: He’s trying to empower women as

much as he can” (cited in Onsman, 2011:56). King Abdullah’s strategy of development is to focus on education, in order to effect crucial change and improve human rights in Saudi Arabia (Mills, 2009). According to Wilcke (2010):

Central to King Abdullah’s reform project have been four areas directly tied to the human rights of Saudi citizens: women’s rights, freedom of expression, judicial fairness, and religious tolerance. Today, Saudis are freer than they were five years ago – Saudi women are less subject to rigid sex segregation in public places, citizens have greater latitude to criticise their government, and reform in the justice system may bring more transparency and fairness in judicial procedures. (Wilcke, 2010 P:1)

2.5.2 Saudi higher education: the culture of segregation

The growth and rapid change in Saudi Arabia resulted in the Saudi government placing considerable emphasis on higher education (HE) from the beginning of the 1970s. The Higher Education Ministry in Saudi Arabia was founded in 1957, being combined with the Ministry of Education in 2015 (Alsubaie et al., 2017). Within the Ministry of Education, official authority and leadership are based on a highly hierarchical and bureaucratic system, focusing on a top-down process of decision making. Universities in Saudi Arabia can be either public or private, having now increased in number to a total of 43 (Ministry of Education, 2020). Beside the internal progression of HE in Saudi, the most significant advancement has been the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP), which has been in place since 2005, with the aim of funding scholarship programmes for Saudi men and women to enable them to study abroad in different specialties, as well as differing countries, including the USA, UK, Canada and Australia (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2020). These developments undertaken by the Saudi Government have been continued by King Salman, including a clear agenda to support the education and empowerment of women as part of Saudi Vision 2030.

However, despite the continued expansion of women’s empowerment, the leadership of higher education institutions (HEIs) remains male dominated and male influenced. In the workplace, certain Saudi sectors and organisations, including universities, remain sex segregated, where, as noted by Metcalf and Amutlaq (2011:340): “gender, work and social relations are governed by a traditional and patriarchal structure”. In addition, segregated Saudi HEIs continue to “reinforce gendered beliefs that women are subordinates, with leadership positions male-dominated” (Jamjom and Kelly, 2013:249). Similarly, Al Mohsen

(2000:22) stated that: “despite the increased record of support, the Saudi government policy of sexual segregation has saddled women with facilities substantially inferior to those available to their male counterparts”.

The patriarchal nature of education in Saudi Arabia has been recognised for normalising women’s role and gender bias, in particular through the inclusion of ideologies of conservative religious scholars within school curricula at several levels (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013; Al-Khalaf, 2019). Furthermore, it has acted to limit the educational fields accessible to women in Saudi universities. Thus, while Saudi females are so far only permitted to study computer science engineering and interrail design engineering, male students are encouraged to study chemical, petroleum and electronical engineering (Metcalf, 2008).

In Saudi Arabia, women’s segregated schools are constructed with high walls and have monitoring screens at each entrance gate (Hamdan, 2005), which also has several male guards on patrol, who are responsible for observing and checking the identity of those entering the female sections of the university. This symbolises the prohibition against Saudi women having any personal contact with any male who is not *mahram* (i.e. a male guardian, mainly related by blood) (Abdalkhail, 2017).

This patriarchal structure is also perpetuated through gendered segregation in key organisations, including Saudi HEIs. This is influenced by tribal Bedouin roots to sustain gender divisions and gendered power relations, supported by political and cultural norms (Al-Lily, 2014; Al-Khateeb, 1998). Similarly, Taleb (2010:471) claimed that “higher education in Saudi Arabia remains a single-sex education system, not because it is believed it is better or more efficient than a mixed-education system, but merely due to the conservative cultures and traditions of such a male-dominated society”.

However, Hamdan (2005) argued that many educated women have a positive perception of segregation in organisations when it comes to job opportunities. Fakhro (1996, cited in Hamdan, 2005:58) described segregation in Saudi Arabia as “a professional advantage to women, since there is no competition with male counterparts for jobs”. This statement, however, fails to grasp that segregation involves ‘male’ advantage, male domination of leadership roles and the maintenance of a masculine status quo. Littrel and Bertsch (2013) described the sociocultural situation of Saudi women as follows:

Societal practices institutionalise negative discrimination concerning women, often codified in laws that prohibit women from participating in much of public life, or fully competing in the labour market ... The patriarchal belt is characterised by extremely restrictive codes of behaviour for women, such as the practice of rigid gender segregation and a powerful ideology linking family honour to female virtue. Men are entrusted with safeguarding family honour through their control over female members; they are backed by complex social arrangements that ensure the protection, restriction, and dependence of women. (Littrel and Bertsch, 2013:313)

Within Saudi HE institutions, leadership positions are dominated by men, facilitated by the segregated campuses in which women are excluded from decision-making (Jamjom and Kelly, 2013; Almazroa et al., 2015). While a small number of researchers have described limited opportunities for women in leadership positions, in competition with other women, much of the existing research into Saudi female and HEI leadership has tended to be over-generalised and optimistic in tone, rather than responding to any solid empirical evidence or demonstrating sufficient sensitivity to the voices and experiences of employed women (Al-Omair, 2015). This indicates the pressing need for additional research to explore the historical, cultural and social aspects of the formation of ethical leadership within the context of Saudi organisations, including HEIs. In addition, it is vital to explore the rationale of ‘ethical’ leadership practices within gender segregated workplaces, alongside the perspective of female employees themselves.

2.5.3 Female leadership in the Saudi context

Current studies focusing on Saudi women and leadership generally explore the barriers that Saudi females encounter when seeking to obtain senior leadership positions (Hamdan, 2005; Al-Ahmadi, 2011, Alselaime, 2012; Alomair, 2015; Abalkhail, 2017). These studies address significant social, cultural and professional factors that are recognised to present enormous challenges to Saudi women when seeking to obtain leadership roles. In *Challenges Facing Women Leaders in Saudi Arabia*, Al-Ahmadi (2011) explored five obstacles facing Saudi women during their attempts to achieve a leadership role, including: (1) social factors; (2) structural factors; (3) the cultural absence of female empowerment; (4) individual attitudes; and (5) the lack of resources. Al-Ahmadi’s (2011) survey of 162 female leaders concluded that, alongside the segregated work environment, the main issues encountered by Saudi woman consist of firstly, difficulties in balancing work and family commitments and,

secondly, a lack of female empowerment. This was supported by Varshney (2019), who outlined the considerable family pressure placed on Saudi women as follows:

The contemporary Saudi Arabian society is open about women's education, but in sharp contrast, women are viewed from a different perspective in the work sphere. The primary focus of the Saudi culture is 'family', where the most vital priority of a woman is to be a wife and a mother. Hence, if a woman desires to work, she has to maintain a balance between work and family responsibilities efficiently, most importantly to focus more on family life. Therefore, a Saudi woman's decision to join the workforce is more of a joint decision in the family and not a personal one. (Varshney, 2019:360)

In addition, Hamdan's (2005) journal article, *Women and Education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Achievements*, examined the political, social and cultural factors influencing female roles within Saudi society. Hamdan (2005) claimed that Saudi women "do not have power in any position and are subordinate in both the private and the public sector to male individuals who may often have inferior qualifications to their female counterparts" (page 46). The author added that "women's education did not change the patriarchal nature of Saudi society. Women in every field are subordinate to men" (48).

In discussing the potential for a change in the situation of Saudi women, Pharaon (2004) outlined the issue of patriarchal resistance to any change in the social status of Saudi women:

Within the family, the father has the final say, which in theory gives him ultimate power. Nevertheless, the women's role is the key to maintaining the family. Not only does she reproduce successive generations, ensuring family continuity, size, and power, but also, she is responsible for the new generation's informal education. It is the mother who transmits the cultural and religious traditions that reinforce solidarity and loyalty to the family. It is not surprising that there has been such strong resistance, from men and women alike, to change in women's roles. (Pharaon, 2004:358)

This huge responsibility within the family leads to a tendency for women to be given the role of the assistant to a male leader in the workplace. Rawaf (1990:212) noted that "the workplace is unquestionably a male bastion and one in which women play a clearly supporting role". Furthermore, Varshney (2019:362) stated that "even though women work,

they are still isolated and controlled in all their actions and behaviour by men, and Saudi society remains divided into two categories, male and female”.

If a woman in Saudi workplace is able to achieve any higher position of leadership, she is treated as the deputy to the male leaders, due to her social role as an assistant being constructed by the patriarchal context, with the aim of maintaining the male status quo (Almunajjed, 1997; Hamdan, 2005). The findings of Elmain and Omair (2010) indicated that Saudi men largely maintain a stereotype of female workers as being inadequate for leadership roles, due to their capabilities being limited by their domestic responsibilities. According to Elmain and Omair (2010), these cultural beliefs encourage many Saudi men to behave in a traditional manner toward Saudi females in work organisations.

Like many sectors in Saudi Arabia, HE is primarily segregated, with two separated campuses forming the female and male sections. Senior leadership positions are male dominated, with women in the female sections holding only supervisory positions, which have limited powers (Al-Mohamed, 2008). For instance, the decisions of a dean in a women’s campus must be approved by the male section (Al-Tamimi, 2004; Alsaleh, 2012). In addition, technological communications between members of two campuses is processed with clear conditions and limitations. For example, male academics are provided with remote-controlled video cameras and receive-only telephone lines to enable them to teach female students in any subjects that female lecturers do not cover (Baki, 2004). In a similar vein, male leaders contact female supervisors by means of a phone call or conference video camera (this being off-camera for women). However, female supervisors in each college are only permitted to attend male board meeting using a microphone.

Geel (2016) noted that physical separation in the Saudi organisational context has created the concept of *hudod* (boarders) to reinforce the interactional boundaries between men and women, which have been culturally interpreted as an aspect of Islamic and traditional morality. As discussed above, embedded masculine and traditional power structures reinforce institutional values and practices, in order to create an imbalance of power between Saudi men and women when it comes to leadership. In addition, the patriarchal roots of leadership in Saudi HE institutions have been endorsed by segregated campuses, so as to maintain female subordination (Al-Fassi, 2010, Al-Rawaf et al., 1991).

Studies of female leadership in Saudi HEIs have emphasised the comparatively greater struggle of female leaders to obtain higher positions than their male counterparts (Al-Shamrani, 2015; Alsubaihi, 2016; Abalkhail, 2017; Alsubaie and Jones, 2017). For example, Abalkhail (2017) investigated leadership challenges and opportunities for Saudi females in two Saudi HEIs. The findings of qualitative interviews with 22 Saudi women in these universities revealed recruitment preferences for men to obtain leadership roles. These results recognised the cultural and religious beliefs supporting the preference for male leadership, as well as discriminatory practices against the promotion of female leadership (Abalkhail, 2017, Almohsen, 2001). Similarly, the outcomes of Alsubaihi's (2016) quantitative study confirmed the restricted opportunities available to enable Saudi women to engage in strategic decision-making.

Despite evidence from current studies concerning Saudi female leadership, the literature remains limited around the narrative of the related challenges and constraints. Within this narrative, Saudi female leaders are still often perceived to be victims, so denying their agency and resistance. This highlights the lack of any research that is based upon or undertakes an in-depth exploration of the voices of Saudi women (both leaders and subordinates), including those focusing on their behaviour, reactions and resistance, in order to understand the ethical issues related to their leadership and followership.

2.5.4 DSU: a unique context of women in HEI leadership

As shown above, the current literature lacks any substantial or serious in-depth analysis of the specific aspects of Saudi female leadership and followership, including women's social and organisational behaviour, and their power relations. This thesis therefore explores a unique context among Saudi HEIs, consisting of a women's university, in order to understand female contextualised leadership behaviour. As noted above, for the purposes of anonymity, this thesis employs the pseudonym DSU to refer to the case study in this research. As outlined in the previous section, Saudi HEIs are gender segregated, with the majority of universities having two sections, male and female, with their leadership positions being male dominated. Only a minority of universities in Saudi Arabia are exclusively for women and led by female leaders.

Over the previous two decades, part of the development strategy of Saudi Arabia has been a clear transformation towards a new era of female leadership and empowerment (Al-Omair, 2018), notably with the establishment of dedicated universities for women and led by female

leaders. Saudi women are thus now beginning to receive senior leadership opportunities, particularly within the education sector (see Table 2.1). As shown in Table 2.1 (below), Saudi women have recently obtained senior roles that have previously been male-dominated, including, for example, that of Deputy Minister.

Saudi females in higher education
4 Female leaders (deputy minister positions in the ministry of education)
1300 Female leaders in Saudi universities
33,000 Female Faculty members in Saudi universities

Table 2.1 Saudi female leaders in higher education. (Ministry of Education, 2020)

The Ministry of Education has stated its support for the empowerment of Saudi women as follows:

The Ministry has increased women's participation in all educational sectors, to unleash their potential to fill high office posts and senior positions, to serve as the Minister's deputies and fill executive positions, such as director generals. The Ministry ranks first in the Kingdom in terms of women empowerment, due to the number of women who have occupied the Deputy-Minister's high post. Among the examples is the appointment of female officials to serve as the Deputy-Minister for Public and Private Education, the Deputy-Minister for Private Undergraduate Education, the Deputy-Minister for Educational Programmes, and the Deputy-Minister for Scholarships. (Ministry of Education, 2020)

These increasing efforts made by government to empower Saudi women indicate that the current study offers a timely and significant focus on Saudi female leadership in HEIs. Most importantly, it attempts to go beyond the 'challenge narrative' present in the limited scope of existing studies of Saudi female leadership, which have remained focused on female leaders' struggles and ongoing victimisation. This thesis seeks to critically examine ethical leadership in the unique organisational context of DSU, so attempting to represent the empowerment of, and the development of an ethical environment for, Saudi women. The aim is therefore to understand the extent to which the behaviour of female leaders can be perceived as fair, equal and empowering of Saudi females, particularly when it comes to taking leadership roles. However, this aspect is less than clear cut, resulting in the need to

explore a number of associated ethical aspects. The distinctive nature of this context, along with the dearth of published research in this area, highlights an urgent need for more studies exploring matters of ethical leadership and gendered power in female-only work environments.

As will be demonstrated in the chapters that follow, female leaders in DSU are under masculine and managerial pressure to act ‘effectively’ and do their best to prove their ‘leadership effectiveness’ over other females, in particular their subordinates. Thus, the existing hierarchical structures, inflexible managerial and cultural norms and values (which are justified through top-down authority and institutional policies) ensure that female leaders have the potential to behave counterproductively and to violate social values in relation to female academics. This raises the important issue of whether this leaves sufficient space for female academics to express their opinions and practice autonomy, particularly when it comes to female academics working in this environment.

2.5.4 Female leadership and followership: gender prejudice

i. Queen Bee Syndrome

There is currently a serious lack of any broad ranging literature examining female leaders and their relationship with their subordinates within patriarchal workplace cultures. This is particularly true when it comes to the ethical aspects of female leadership in relation to their followers and influential male figures. A degree of research has previously been undertaken into the ‘Queen Bee syndrome’ phenomena (e.g. Ellemers et al., 2004; Staines et al., 1974), studying female leaders who act to hinder their female subordinates: “Queen Bees are senior women in masculine organisational cultures who have fulfilled their career aspirations by dissociating themselves from their gender while simultaneously contributing to the gender stereotyping of other women” (Derks et al., 2011: 519). Researchers such as Garcia-Retamero and Lopez-Zafra (2006) and Parks-Stamm, Heilman, and Hearn (2008) have explored individual motives for the practices of Queen Bee managers, including low self-esteem and an adherence to gender stereotypes. The analysis of Ellemers (2011) concluded that this syndrome amounts to a form of social identity threat, while Derks et al. (2011:54) noted that “women working in organisations in which their gender is devalued, experience this as a threat to their social identity”.

In *Discrimination in the Academic Profession*, Abramson (1975) argued that female academics can also encounter gender bias from female leaders in the workplace. She

noted that Queen Bee syndrome is nurtured in a male-dominated culture that encourages women in senior positions to follow a male-like conduct. Thus, queen bees hold the belief that their female subordinates remain at this level due to their own weakness preventing them from achieving their own senior levels (Abramson, 1975). It is widely believed that female leaders' agreement with social and patriarchal gender stereotypes about female employees in the workplace contributes to maintaining male privilege (Ellemers et al., 2004). Glass (1992:410) offered the following clarification of gender bias: "academicians tended to believe that women are remote, controlling, inconsiderate, annoying, not trusted and sometimes irate". In addition, Glass (1992:412) stated that "women have been excluded from power, socially isolated and, sidetracked and ...men are reluctant to give power; they feel uncomfortable dealing with women, who they believe are different from themselves, and are, therefore, unreliable or unpredictable."

Zhao and Foo (2016) observed and commented upon certain traits and patterns of queen bees, particularly when it came to their subordinates:

(A) Queen Bee bullies subordinates and obstructs other women's career advancement. They are seen as selfish, insensitive, and power hungry. If a senior woman leader has a reputation as a queen bee, women in less senior positions often are advised to avoid working with her. (Zhao and Foo, 2016:1)

Although Queen Bee studies clarify several possible explanations of female leaders' reproduction of masculine practices, they tend to overlook the ethical complexity and consequences of these practices, particularly within a segregated workplace such as a female-only university.

ii. Internalised prejudice

Previous studies of female leadership have shed light on gender stereotypes and negative beliefs concerning women's leadership style and behaviour (Burgess and Borgida, 1999; Heilman, 2001; Grole and Montgomery, 2000; Kloot, 2004; Tahiraj, 2010). Eagly and Karau (2002) employed role congruity theory to explain the existing gender bias against female leaders, alongside its association with their feminine social role. Thus, once female leaders exercise a level of power beyond their accepted gender role, they are subject to negative judgments for stepping outside the territory of their perceived gender role (Ridgeway, 2002). This impacts on the behaviour of many female leaders, as, in order to

avoid such judgements, they tend to associate themselves with their gender stereotypes (Ridgeway and Correll, 2004). The stereotypical image of leadership is both masculine and male oriented, resulting in society “consider(ing) women unqualified because they lack the stereotypical directive and assertive qualities of good leaders” (Carli and Eagly, 2007:128).

The association between leadership and male preferences is nurtured and reinforced in masculine organisational cultures. According to Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, and Ristikari (2011):

The implications of the masculinity of leader roles for prejudice against female leaders are straightforward: men fit the cultural construal of leadership better than women do and thus have better access to leader roles and face fewer challenges in becoming successful in them. (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011:637)

Women themselves can also internalise these stereotypes of female leaders, with Bearman, Korobov and Throne (2009: 11) stating that: “internalised sexism refers to women’s incorporation of sexist practices, and to the circulation of those practices among women, even in the absence of men”. Thus, when female leaders who are in power apply these prejudiced beliefs to other women, particularly those in less powerful (or subordinate) positions, it can become internalised oppression. According to Pheterson (1986:148) “internalised oppression is the incorporation and acceptance by individuals within an oppressed group of the prejudices against them within the dominant society”.

As noted above, this current study is significant as, while studies examining internalised sexism and internalised oppression are able to shed light on some of the ethical aspects of gendered behaviour that act to hinder women’s access to equality and justice (particularly in the workplace), there remains a dearth of studies exploring these and wider ethical issues that affect women within the segregated context.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has examined institutional power and its significance for issues related to ethical and counterproductive leadership and ambiguous outcomes. It has also highlighted that, as elsewhere, the traditions of leaderism and managerialism in HEIs tend to be linked to preoccupations with hierarchy and quality assurance requirements in Saudi Arabia, with

attention given to their significance for the potential for ethical conflicts and contradictory processes.

The second part of this chapter explored the masculine and patriarchal culture of HE and leadership in Saudi Arabia. It outlined the reproduction of masculine leadership practices within gendered organisational contexts, with particular attention paid to the context of HE. Finally, there was a discussion of the role of culture in co-constructing ethical and counterproductive leadership debates and reinforcing the social conditions of leaders' practices.

This section concluded that current critical and feminist leadership studies have generally failed to consider the specifics of a dialectical investigation of ethical and counterproductive leadership behaviour within such contexts. Thus, the uniqueness of Saudi gender segregated HE, as exemplified by DSU, can expose unexplored ethical issues in the practices of females exercising levels of leadership power. This highlighted the need for a detailed consideration of the ethical justifications and the consequences of female leaders' practices, as well as the reactions of faculty members, in order to fully appreciate the complexity, tensions and contradiction of such contexts. The emphasis placed in this current study on the voices of female academics is vital for illuminating perceptions beyond the views and justifications of the leaders themselves, as well as to disclose the contradictory nature of ethical leadership and the counterproductive outcomes of leadership practices.

This chapter has established a clear understanding of the research context, along with an analytical framework informed by dialectics in leadership research. Chapter Three introduces the research aim and objectives, and outlines the methodological implications of this study.

Chapter Three

Research objectives and methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 provided a critical exploration of the previous studies concerning ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviour, examining the theoretical limitations of existing approaches. Meanwhile, Chapter 2 discussed the use of a dialectical approach for investigating ethical and counterproductive leadership practices. This framework was employed by the present study to investigate how female Saudi academics and leaders at DSU constructed an understanding of ethical leadership, and to consider the extent to which such insights reveal the counterproductive side of leadership practices. This chapter discusses the research aim and objectives of this thesis. In addition, it presents the research methodology and data collection process employed for the research and justifies their selection. It concludes with closing comments regarding the limitations of the study and the approach to this empirical work.

The first part of this chapter discusses the philosophical approach of the study, and its ontological and epistemological alignment. It also explores the challenges involved in maintaining reflexivity, since there was a high likelihood that the researcher would encounter ethical dilemmas during the data collection process.

3.2 Research aim and objectives

The impetus for this study originated in a critical examination of the current literature concerning ethical leadership and counterproductive behaviour (Brown and Mitchell, 2010; Ciulla, 2004; Treviño et al., 2003; Fox and Spector, 1999; Spector et al., 2006). Since the extant literature primarily examined these terms as distinct and fixed frameworks, this study sought to problematise the conventional understanding of ethical leadership, and to question the extent to which it reproduces counterproductive practices among leaders themselves. By employing a dialectical lens (Collinson, 2005), the study aimed to address these issues in a gender segregated institution, specifically in the Saudi HE context, and by focusing on female academics' perspectives. The presentation of female academics' voices sought to represent the views of those who are socially and hierarchically marginalised in Saudi HEIs (Jamjom et al., 2011). The current study sought to address the following research objectives:

- i. To explore how constructions of ethical leadership are created and justified by both female leaders and academics within DSU

- ii. To investigate the dialectics between ethical leadership and counterproductive behaviour in a distinctive and under-researched organisational context
- iii. To reveal the significance of relational power dynamics and socio-cultural constructions of ethical leadership for academics' experiences and workplace behaviour, with particular attention to counterproductive outcomes.

3.3 Research paradigm

According to Hammersley (2007:1), a research paradigm is “a set of philosophical assumptions about the phenomena to be studied, about how they can be understood, and even about the proper purpose and product of research”. Meanwhile, Burrell and Morgan (1979:1) explained that a research paradigm clarifies the “nature of assumptions” and “generates its own distinctive analyses of social life”, noting that

In order to understand alternative points of view it is important that a theorist be fully aware of the assumptions upon which his own perspective is based. Such an appreciation involves an intellectual journey, which takes him outside the realm of his own familiar domain. It requires that he become aware of the boundaries, which define his perspective. (ibid.:ix)

The key reference of this quotation is to a paradigm as a basic belief system shaped by ontological and epistemological concerns (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Ontology is the ‘study of being’, and concerns what actually exists in the world (Burrell and Morgan, 1979); hence research ontology concerns the nature of reality perceived in either an objective or a subjective way (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). Meanwhile, epistemology concerns social knowledge, and how certain phenomena should be studied, for example via positivist or interpretivist approaches (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

The debate between positivism and social constructionism is important for differentiating this study from other contributions to debates on leadership and workplace behaviour. According to Bryman (2004), the debate in question is informed by political arguments regarding the nature, significance, and value of research methods. While positivist approaches assume that reality is objective, and that knowledge can be apprehended through static criteria, social constructionism investigates subjective meanings within particular

social contexts (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). This constructivist position “attempts to know things are inherently and unavoidably subjective” (Phakiti and Paltridge, 2015:18). Social constructivism generates an understanding of knowledge based on the inter-subjectivity that human beings create through their experience and interactions with the world (Wellington, 2000). Therefore, knowledge and social process are interrelated and intertwined (Young and Collin, 2004).

In accordance with the aim and objectives of this thesis, it can be argued that social constructionism is vital for promoting an informed understanding of “the socially constructed character of lived realities” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2013:56). This means that “the knower and the known interact and shape one another” (Guba and Lincoln, 2005:22). Here, the social, cultural, and organisational contexts, namely the relationships that frame human behaviour, are too complex to be measured on the basis of fixed laws or rigid frames of reference (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Therefore, in basic terms, a researcher must recognise that individuals are social actors whose knowledge is influenced by their meaning making, relationships, and lived experience within their social world (Saunders et al., 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). In other words, it is “something which has to be personally experienced” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:2), rather than being objectively acquired. In addition, this thesis also considered “social reality and knowledge production from a more problematised vantage point, emphasising the constructed nature of social reality, the constitutive role of language, and the value of research as a critique” (Prasad, 2005:7).

As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, different leadership approaches, including essentialist and social constructionist, are cultivated and refined within distinctive and often discrete categories of the relevant literature. Unlike the essentialist or traditional approaches that focus on the ‘scientific’ traits, skills, and behaviour of leaders, critical and non-positivist approaches explore how leadership processes are culturally and socially constructed realities, meanings, identities, and actions (Cunliffe, 2009; Fairhurst, 2007). In an early work in the field, Smircich and Morgan (1982:123) introduced the importance of *meaning making* in leadership processes, arguing that “leadership is realised in the process whereby one or more individuals succeed in attempting to ... define the reality to others”. From this position, this study was inspired by the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979:253), who “reject the view that the world of human affairs can be studied in the manner of the natural sciences. The central endeavour is to understand the subjective world of human experience”. This

subjective human meaning making is “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998:67).

When considering the philosophy of social constructionism that was employed for the purpose of this thesis, it was important to blur the boundaries between social actors’ roles, power, and context. This approach suggested an exploration beyond ‘fixed-power’ notions where “individuals not only influence each other but are also influenced by and influence this wider, complex context” (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2018:136). This engendered the requirement to understand the in-depth co-constructed relational processes between leaders and subordinates (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011) by exploring their asymmetrical power relationships, as these are embedded within specific contexts (Collinson, 2008). Therefore, the ontology and epistemology, namely the reality and knowledge, of the present study were socially constructed, and focused on the determining of power relations within the particular context of DSU.

3.4 A critical sociological feminist perspective: assumptions, considerations, and implications for this study

The choice of a particular paradigm for this study, namely social constructionism, promoted an integrative critical sociological and feminist perspective for this thesis, since the notions and assumptions of the three lenses concerned were consistent with each other for the purpose of acknowledging and exploring a multi-layered research phenomenon. As Blackmore (2013:139) explained

A feminist critical sociological perspective treats leadership as a conceptual lens through which to problematise the nature, purpose and capacities of educational systems and organisations to reform and indeed re-think their practices in more socially just ways. Feminist understandings provide substantive and normative alternatives to how we theorise and practice leadership.

In order to convey an understanding of the integration of critical, sociological, and feminist perspectives the following sections explain the suppositions of each lens, in turn.

3.4.1 Critical

Critical theory in social philosophy stems from the classic stances of enlightenment that focus on critiques, “unnecessary restrictive traditions, ideologies, assumptions, power relations, identity formations, and so forth, that inhibit or distort opportunities for autonomy, clarification of genuine needs and want” (Alvesson and Willmott 1992:435). The theory was developed in the 1930s by members of the Frankfurt School in Germany, and was based on Marxist philosophy. According to Rexhepi and Torres (2011:679), “the concepts of contradiction, dialectics, exploitation, domination and legitimation are pivotal in the arsenal of Critical Theory”. The definition of the concept *critical* in critical theory was explained by Morrow and Brown (1994:7) as follows:

The term *critical* itself, in the context of ‘critical social theory’ has a range of meanings not apparent in common sense where critique implies negative evaluations. This is, to be sure, one sense of critique in critical social theory, given its concern with unveiling ideological mystifications in social relations; but another even more fundamental connotation is methodological, given a concern with critique as involving establishing the presuppositions of approaches to the nature of reality, knowledge, and explanation; yet another dimension of critique is associated with the self-reflexivity of the investigator and the linguistic basis of representation.

Critical theory provides a lens for the radical social research view of the conflict theory of society, and is applied in different approaches (Calhoun, 1995). It challenges traditional methodological reliance on a single method to generate knowledge (Campbell and Bunting, 1991). Rather, the lens emphasises the unearthing of hidden ideologies and power differences, in order to obtain emancipation. It also focuses on the use of dialectical approaches to reveal contradictions in social situations (Ray, 1992).

The lens employed by the present study was situated within critical leadership studies, and employed philosophical notions from critical management theory. Under the critical approaches umbrella, leadership studies seek to problematise ‘taken for granted’ assumptions of leadership, and to challenge the related mainstream and traditional theories (Learmonth and Morrell, 2016). Moreover, critical leadership studies scholars discard the dominant positivist and psychological perspectives of leadership, as they reflect a limited critical exploration of power relations. As Alvesson, Hardy and Harley (2008:75) explained,

“These studies suggest a critical approach to culture would be underpinned by an attempt to create emancipatory social change”.

While the critical lens focuses on power and inequality in leadership studies, there is a tendency within the approach to ignore the shifting, ongoing, and relational nature of power. Many critical studies that are based on theories, such as labour process theory or post structuralism, emphasise the political, structural, and radical nature of power. Meanwhile, according to Alvesson and Spicer (2012), current critical studies concerning leadership tend to construct a negative exploration of leadership that is mainly associated with domination and control. Moreover, Collinson (2005) stressed the need to recognise the nature of power as being asymmetrical, rather than one-sided, which implies that power exercised by leaders can generate several forms of resistance and contradictory reactions by subordinates.

The critical aspects of leadership focused on by the present thesis are leadership, power, the construction of leaders’ behaviour, and their exercise of power. In addition, the thesis also highlighted the agency of academics, their perspectives, and their reactions towards leadership. The critical assumptions within the overall integrated lens of this thesis primarily sought to challenge the ‘taken for granted’ normative notions of ethical leadership, and to highlight the role of organisational structure and cultural ideologies in power reproduction and social division.

3.4.2 Sociological

The sociological approach in social sciences concerns social behaviour and study of society and culture in relation to human behaviour. During the 19th century, theorists such as Weber, Durkheim, and Simmel proposed the key issues and the basics of sociology theory (Sawyer, 2011). Within the sociological approach, social interactions and behaviours are best understood within their context, and via historical exploration. Studies of human behaviour and interactions can be explored sociologically at both micro and macro levels (Collins, 1988). Microsociology focuses on daily interaction behaviours and interpersonal relationship dynamics between people. Meanwhile, macrosociology involves the analysis of the social system, institutions, and process by studying the role played by society’s structure, family systems, education, and religion (Hillbert, 1990).

In the 20th century, the American sociologist Wright Mills (1959) offered an expanded perspective on this approach, named the *sociological imagination*. This referred to “the study

of the public issues that derive from the private troubles of people” (Brewer, 2004:81). In his work, Mills (ibid.:226) described sociological imagination in the following way:

Know that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues, and in terms of the problems of history-making. Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles, and to the problems of the individual life. Know that the problems of social science, when adequately formulated, must include both troubles and issues, both biography and history, and the range of their intricate relations. Within that range the life of the individual and the making of societies occur; and within that range the sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our time.

In addition, Mills (ibid) argued that the sociological imagination enables individuals to expand and shift their self-centred view and personal issue to broader scope issues in the social world, explaining that,

What people need ... is a quality of mind that will help them to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves. The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. (ibid.:5)

In the context of leadership studies, a sociologically-driven perspective aims to “gain an in depth understanding of local configurations and the social construction of leadership” (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2018:6). It focuses on a particular context, and explores the local meaning, culture, and relational process of leadership (ibid). From this perspective, the present study appreciated the way that Saudi cultural meanings, social traditions and norms are applied to leadership, and to the local construction of contextualising conditions in HEIs. An awareness of the Saudi gender segregated organisational background is important for understanding and exploring phenomena such as leadership.

Building on sociological assumptions, this thesis addressed the relationship between the meaning of ethical behaviours and cultural context. In this sense, both leaders’ behaviours and employees’ reactions were associated with social causes and factors placed within local

meaning and relational processes. As Jackson and Parry (2018) explained, it is important to explore the 'place' lens in leadership, both geographically and historically. Emphasising the role of culture as being deeply rooted within leadership construction helps to facilitate the acknowledgement of a broad range of social relations, behaviours, and reactions interpreted by shared meanings, societal norms, and values.

Therefore, by applying a sociological perspective to this thesis it is possible to illuminate how social behaviour and the interaction of leaders and academics is practiced within a certain group, society, and culture. This helped to link the concerns of the female academics involved with wider social issues in Saudi HEI culture, as well as with wider national culture. Moreover, the ethical issues that might be ignored or misunderstood in the Saudi HEI context can be exposed using the sociological perspective, and this facilitated the connecting of social patterns in universities within a particular time and place, such as DSU. In this gender-segregated context, the use of a sociological lens expanded the focus range of leaders' and followers' social relations from both a micro-level, namely the agency of the leaders and female academics, and a macro-level, namely the social structure and institutional system concerned. All aspects of female leadership behaviour and academics' reactions within DSU were influenced by factors interrelated with the historical background of Saudi society, including the role of family, cultural and traditional norms, tribalism, and religion. The exploration of this issue helped to illuminate a path for social change and Saudi women's emancipation.

3.4.3 Feminist

The feminist perspective is primarily a problematic lens encompassing shared understandings that focus on the gender aspect, with the aim of obtaining social justice (Blackmore, 2013). According to Acker (1989:67)

A feminist paradigm would place women and their lives, and gender, in a central place in understanding social relations as a whole. Such a paradigm would not only pose new questions about women and gender but also help to create a more complex and adequate account of industrial, capitalist society. A feminist paradigm would also contain a methodology that produces knowledge for, rather than of women in their many varieties and situations.

The rationale behind diverse notions of feminism is to facilitate an appreciation of different, valuable layers of gender power relations (Macdonald et al., 2002). For example, as Crenshaw (1989) explained, one of the main concepts of feminism that focuses on women and race is intersectionality, and he criticised the *single-axis framework* that has a “tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis” (ibid. p. 139). Meanwhile, Davis (2008:68) defined intersectionality as being “the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power”.

More recently, Mirza (2013:6) discussed the different layers of intersectionality in feminism, such as religion, in a study of Muslim women from several countries who work in the UK, explaining:

Intersectionality draws our attention to the ways in which identities, as subject positions, are not reducible to just one or two or three or even more dimensions layered onto each other in an additive or hierarchal way. Rather intersectionality refers to the converging and conterminous ways in which the differentiated and variable organising logics of race, class, gender, religion, and belief structure the material conditions which produce economic, social and political inequality in women’s real lived lives.

It is important to note the significance of the concept of intersectionality for understanding the feminist lens for the present study, as it focused on women, Saudis, and Muslims. Regional and religious aspects are important elements of intersectionality, as they reflect complex levels of gender, power relations, and social process. At a segregated university, the experiences of Saudi females are shaped by their gender, as well as by several other layers, such as religion, age, class, and ethnicity.

Islamic feminism defines women’s rights and gender equality according to a religious framework (Abou-Bakr, 2013). In the Saudi context, religious beliefs can reveal people’s meaning making and shared morals and ethics, as well as their social behaviour. The concept of Islamic feminism was developed in Iran in the 1990s, in order to discuss issues of gender equality (Mojab, 2001). It developed the Western conceptualisation of feminism to offer an expanded analysis of gender, religion, and justice for the Islamic context (Abou-Lughod, 2013), helping to deconstruct patriarchal interpretations of the Islamic approach (Cooke,

2004). As Brown (2013) explained, Islamic feminism resists key aspects of hegemonic power, such as authorising patriarchy through the religious elite, and the male construction of Islamic laws, as well as Western attempts of internationalisation and modernisation.

The concept of feminism in the Middle East is constantly questioned in terms of its relevance to Western feminism (Golley, 2004), although Woodiwiss, Smith and Lockwood (2017) argued that feminism is a concept that uncovers gender, power issues, and marginalisation, and must therefore be relevant to all women, regardless of their context. However, ignoring the historical and cultural perspectives of women's issues is problematic (Mohanty, 1988), as the approach represents various feminist views and experiences as "a multi-stranded project" (Coffey and Delamont, 2000:5). As Dietz (2003:400) observed, regarding a wide-ranging description of feminism:

Thus, what really exists under the standard rubric of feminist theory is a multifaceted, discursively contentious field of inquiry that does not promise to resolve itself into programmatic consensus or converge onto any shared conceptual ground.

The feminist perspective within leadership studies primarily highlights the role of gender, debates concerning stereotypes, and the differences between men and women, and Billing and Alvesson (2000:149) noted that feminist leadership studies should be viewed as a "regulative ideal, a normative construct, rather than an empirical phenomenon", inferring the role of the cultural and social construction understanding of femininity and masculinity within a local context. Moreover, while the concept of feminism addresses gender inequality, the nature of gender equality itself differs from one context to another, indeed, "critical feminist studies demonstrate that differences and inequalities can take multiple, intersecting forms" (Collinson, 2020:7). Hence, a feminist approach reveals several forms and voices, as women in different part of the world encounter a variety of different struggles.

By employing a feminist lens that focused beyond single fixed notions of feminism, this thesis sought to show the interrelated and multiple layers of Saudi women's experiences, and the social construction of ethics, gender, and leadership. The motivation for this stance was the belief that feminist meanings and notions are subjective, and that there should therefore be a wide spectrum for appreciating multiple explorations of gender issues in leadership and followership. The study of the shared experiences of women and leadership in a Saudi HEI explored gender and power relations in leadership, and in order to understand

the narratives of the Saudi female academics and leaders involved in the present study, it was important to uncover the lived experiences of these women. This involved both micro and macro levels of exploration. At the micro level, this thesis unravelled the constructions of ‘the leader’, individualistic understandings, and masculine patterns of ethical/counterproductive behaviours, while at the macro level, it considered the contextual issues of the organisational and cultural patriarchy construction of ethical leadership, and its counterproductive outcomes in a segregated context, namely Saudi HEIs. In alignment with the feminist lens employed by the study, interviews were conducted with female Saudi leaders and academics, firstly to counter the hegemonic masculine narrative of ethical leadership, and secondly to represent a marginalised group, namely Saudi women, within the literature. Moreover, this study sought to illuminate a space of female followership agency and resistance by emphasising the role of the gendered workplace and of the presence of hegemonic masculinity. Accordingly, the illustration of leadership behaviour provided explained how certain female voices are privileged in a gender-segregated workplace, while others are marginalised.

3.5 Maintaining reflexivity

According to Denzin (1997:27), the social researchers’ “problem of reflexivity” concerns the matter of when “our subjectivity becomes entangled in the lives of others”. This problem primarily occurs since “representation ... is always self-presentation ... the Other’s presence is directly connected to the writer’s self-presence in the text” (Denzin, 1997:28). Critical, post structural, interpretive, and feminist research all require vocal reflexivity (Grosz, 1995), especially feminist studies where reflexivity is regarded as the main element of its dialogue (Fonow and Cook, 1991). This highlights the need for reflexive awareness of “how knowledge is acquired, organised, and interpreted is relevant to what the claims are” (Altheide and Johnson, 1994:486), suggesting that researchers should attempt to deconstruct and reflect on all of their presumptions, and recognise the nature of knowledge in exploring certain phenomena. Hence, “Reflexivity challenges us as researchers/writers to revisit what we thought we understood about our research participants, our own language, and ultimately ourselves” (Wickens et al., 2017:863).

Meanwhile, May (1998:173) explained that the issue of “epistemology of reception” raises critical questions about “how and under what circumstances social scientific knowledge is received, evaluated, and acted upon and under what circumstances”. Consequently, “reflexivity is the process of becoming self-aware ... [t]he researcher continually critiques

impressions and hunches, locates meanings, and relates these to specific contexts and experiences” (Begoray and Banister, 2010:788).

As a Saudi female academic, it was important that I retained a certain degree of reflexivity when conducting the data gathering and analysis for this study, and when exploring the issues involved in this research. The *reflexive* acts involved in conducting this research mirrored my own biased assumptions and emotionally oriented thoughts. The main motivation for exploring ethics and leadership in Saudi HEIs was the awareness of the context being a ‘man’s world’, a perception that was partly stimulated by my own experience. As Olesen (1998:314–315) observed, “we cannot rid ourselves of the cultural self we bring with us into the field any more than we can disown the eyes, ears, and skin through which we take in our intuitive perceptions about the new and strange world we have entered”. It is therefore important to declare the efforts I made to distance myself as a ‘researcher’ from what was ‘researched’. While I certainly felt an association with the participants in the study on many levels, as a non-DSU employee, I was also an ‘outsider’. The fact that the study was conducted at a university where I had not worked helped me to recognise the participants’ individual knowledge and experience of being a women employed at an HEI.

In addition, as a scholar with an interest in critical, sociological, and feminist leadership studies, inference may have unintentionally carried a presupposition to challenge the status quo. As Mason (2002:192) explained, the reflexive sense of a “standpoint”, or “epistemological privilege” is present in the researcher in emancipatory research, which is “granted by one’s social location in relation to oppression”. Therefore, I acknowledged the influence of my own intellectual position on the study process and the data analysis of this thesis. As Gabriel (2015:334) observed,

The consciously reflexive researcher then cannot deal with her empirical material as something separate from herself – as something stored in a computer file, to be processed, squeezed or distilled to generate knowledge at a later date. Data is not facts or representations of facts but records of particular types of social encounters.

By ensuring the presence of reflexivity as a researcher, I believe that the experiences gathered in the process of a study shape the meaning and understanding of a research

topic, and that the researcher eventually acknowledges a conscious and active epistemological position that is influenced the analysis of ideas, themes, and arguments.

Keeping reflexive awareness during the course of this research required a clear understanding of epistemic authority alongside the ethical responsibility of the researcher. Structured moments of self-awareness and reflection were built into the conduct of the research, and these helped me to reflect on my own experiences working in Saudi HEIs, as well as my knowledge and processes as a PhD researcher. I reflected on how my personal experience as a Saudi female academic created this indifferent impression of, and ongoing ‘concerns’ about, leadership practices. Here, my perspective on leadership is socially constructed through my own experience, which is drawn upon familiarity with a Saudi HE organization. This fits with the choice of a social constructionist paradigm which mainly considers the researcher as ‘the primary instrument’ in the process of data collection (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

During the data collection process, I felt that my work experience assisted me in building rapport and engaging with participants’ discussion with a good level of understanding of the context because of the often assumed extent of shared understanding and sensitivity to respondent situations and contexts (Adamson and Johansson, 2016). Yet it was also important for me to continue reflecting on the feeling of belonging, need for independent scrutiny and detachment, and to understand my role as a researcher. After each interview and observation process, I went through my notes and then recorded in a journal how they related to respondents’ accounts of their experiences.

‘For non-positivist studies, which utilise reflection to reveal the researcher’s bias, the paradigmatic rules require that these biases should be included rather than excluded from the study’ (Mantzoukas, 2005, p. 39). In order to reduce researcher bias and increase the validity of the study, care was taken to employ a number of strategies recommended by social scientists (e.g., Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Hertz, 1997). This usually happens through reflexivity where the researcher ‘will try to make explicit how intersubjective elements impact on data collection and analysis in an effort to enhance the trustworthiness, transparency and accountability of their research’ (Finlay, 2002, pp. 211–212).

In this case, I had to step back and observe the study participants objectively, which helped answer the epistemological question ‘what do I know?’ (Hertz, 1997, p. viii). This approach

encouraged me to address the power of knowing, including my own subjectivity. In the second step back, I reflected on the observation itself, which provided me with the second crucial question suggested by Hertz (1997, p. viii), ‘how do I know what I know?’ To achieve this, I allowed all the study participants either to confirm my understanding of the data interpretation or to correct it, which ensured their involvement in the sense-making process of my own investigation. Through questioning my own interpretations and engaging the participants in the interrogation, I was able to come up with a more comprehensive interpretation of my data.

3.6 Adopting a qualitative method

There were a number of reasons why a qualitative method was selected for the purpose of this research, the first of which was the nature of the study’s aim and objectives. The study sought to explore the perceptions and experiences of female participants within a local context, and a qualitative approach was suitable for addressing the matter of leadership within its cultural and organisational context, in relation to gender equality and social justice. This study also sought to investigate the understanding of ethical leadership, its construction, and its counterproductive outcomes in the context of a Saudi HEI. In particular, it explored the interrelated dialectics of ethical/counterproductive leadership practices from the perception of both female leaders and academics at DSU. In order to do so, it examined the participants’ understanding of ethical leadership, how they constructed sense-making from the context in which they lived, and from which they may draw individualistic conventions to aid their understanding. The study also explored how structural and managerial factors co-constructed ethical/counterproductive leadership tensions, and finally sought to understand the socio-cultural influence on, and constrictions to the ethical/counterproductive dialectics in the participants’ contextual lived experience of leading and being led.

A second factor involved in the selection of a qualitative method for this research was the nature of its philosophical assumptions. As explained previously in this chapter, social constructionism emphasises “the way in which participants make sense of their socially constructed world and especially by enhancing our understanding of, among others, the symbolic dimensions of organisational life” (Prasad and Prasad, 2002:4).

Furthermore, the use of a qualitative method for leadership studies facilitates a more critical form of enquiry than the use of other traditional methods. This is because the use of the alternative, quantitative method would employ a large sample of participants, and would

primarily be concerned with the top-level of leadership, consequently providing results that would be overly abstract and decontextualised (Bryman, 2011; Parry et al., 2014). In contrast, as Schedlitzki and Edwards (2018:331) argued that, “researchers adopting a qualitative approach will be interested in exploring emerging issues of leadership in a particular, local context. They may also be interested in gaining insights into how leadership as a local influencing process happens or what embodied experiences of leadership are”. Meanwhile, Denzin and Lincoln (2008:4) described qualitative research more broadly as follows

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the real world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self ... qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world.

Meanwhile, Creswell (2013:15) noted that the use of a qualitative method provides a “complex, holistic picture ... that takes the reader into the multiple dimensions of a problem or issue and displays it in all of its complexity”, and Gillham (2000:11) explained:

Qualitative methods enable you to carry out an investigation where other methods are not practicable; to investigate situations where little is known about what is there, or what is going on; to explore complexities that are beyond the scope of more ‘controlled’ approaches; to ‘get under the skin’ of a group or organisation to find out what really happens – the informal reality which can only be perceived from the inside; to view the case from the inside out, to see it from the perspective of those involved; to carry out research into the processes leading to results rather than into the ‘significance’ of the results themselves’.

3.6.1 Qualitative case study

In qualitative research, the focus on ‘the case’ denotes the choice of what is to be explored beyond the methodological options (Stake, 2005). According to Yin (2009:18) the case study can be defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context”. It is important to distinguish the case study approach by considering that it is “a type of research that focuses on a single thing with depth, looking

at this without aiming to generalise it; the thing can be a person, group, an institution, a country, an event, a period in time or whatever” (Thomas, 2016:49).

As Yin (2003) explained, there are three types of case study: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive. An *explanatory* case study is used to study relationships, such as cause and effect, while an *exploratory* case study is employed to investigate phenomena using an intervention, where there is a lack of preliminary research, and is keen to offer further propositions. Finally, a *descriptive* case study is used to describe a phenomenon and its occurrences. As Yin (ibid.) explained, another significant consideration when deciding which form of case study approach to employ is whether a *single* holistic case is suitable for conducting a particular piece of research to obtain an understanding of a phenomenon, or whether this is best achieved using a *multiple* case study.

In terms of the present thesis, it was deemed most suitable to employ an exploratory single case study for two reasons. Firstly, the subject of the research required investigation within an explicit and distinctive organisational setting. Therefore, the investigation of ethical/counterproductive leadership and power relations within an HEI informed the choice of method used, since the exploration of university leadership practices should be conducted within a segregated organisational context, and cannot be separated from its social and physical location. This accounted for the unique nature of DSU, due to its distinctive female leadership, as an exceptional case in Saudi organisations. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2017:16), “Studies of exceptional cases often challenge and assist theorists to account for enigmatic counterexamples as the margins of generalised explanations, offering invaluable opportunities to improve abstracted representation of social phenomena”.

Secondly, in the case study method, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are blurred, each case cannot be considered without its context (Yin, 2003). In terms of the present study, it can be argued that as a segregated Saudi institution, DSU is a bounded entity within the context of a leadership exploration, namely that of female academics’ and leaders’ perceptions, interpretations, and local cultural constructions. As Stake (2005:438) claimed, a “case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied”, therefore the case study method was intentionally selected for the present research, due to the fact that it concerned a distinct, bounded entity within a given socio-cultural background.

3.6.2 Selecting DSU

The selection of DSU for the purpose of this study was due to the following reasons. Firstly, DSU is a unique (woman only) university with female leaders as the principal decision-makers leading a Saudi university. At the time of the study, DSU had the following leadership positions: a female rector of the university; five vice-rectors, two of whom were male; and female deans of colleges, directors, supervisors of institutions, and heads of departments. The recruitment by DSU of a female rector in an equal position to that occupied by male rectors at Saudi universities elsewhere, as well as the presence of female deans, directors, and heads of departments, is believed to represent a 'transformational' step towards gender equality in the country. The exceptional nature of DSU as a segregated, female-led university in the Saudi context was the reason for selecting it as the case for this thesis. When distinguishing between a typical and exceptional case, Ermakoff (2014:223) noted that,

As social scientists we are interested in the typical and the representative. It is through the typical and the representative that we identify regularities and that we abstract patterns. But exceptional cases are at odds with the typical. They do not fit in. That is why we view them as exceptional.

He explained that the reasons for selecting exceptional cases are as follows:

Cases that impress us as exceptional - events, data points, ethnographic sites or moral dilemmas - wear different hats. Their contribution reflects the hat which they wear- or to be more accurate, the hat which we make them wear. (1) They play a critical role when they catch assumptions and expectations off guard. As they call into question standard categories, cases that strike us as peculiar challenge grids of classification and analysis. (2) They acquire paradigmatic value when they exemplify the characteristic features of an empirical class that has escaped systematic investigation. In so doing, they point to new objects of inquiry. (3) When they magnify sets of relations that in less peculiar or extreme instances tend to remain invisible, their contribution is heuristic. (ibid.:224)

Secondly, DSU is recognised as an institution that empowers Saudi women, the leadership of which seeks to create justice and ethical practices for women in education. Moreover, DSU is one of the main symbolic Saudi universities currently attempting to create an ethical

environment for Saudi women, as a successful representative of female leadership. The efforts of DSU concerning its female empowerment plan are aligned with the Saudi Ministry of Education strategy that includes the promotion of women's empowerment and leadership readiness as a key objective. As the Ministry of Education website explains:

The Ministry of Education strives to achieve its goals by empowering and involving women to make their significant contribution to the national development in realisation of the Kingdom Vision 2030. In pursuit of this goal, every possible effort has been exerted by the Ministry to provide women with free, quality education, and leadership training, which should ultimately make a significant impact on their skills and readiness to become an influential contributor to the country's future development. (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2020)

3.6.3 Researching “hard-to-reach” Populations

Sydor (2013, p, 36) described *hard-to-reach* or *hidden* participants thus: ‘hard-to-reach populations are difficult for researchers to access’. Ellard-Gray and others (2015, p. 66) say that these participants are ‘certain social groups (that) are often difficult for researchers to access because of their social or physical location, vulnerability, or otherwise hidden nature’. Understanding the social and cultural factors that affect respondents is significant in order to understand how they contribute to DSU faculty members’ lack of participation opportunities. For Saudi females working in universities, participation in research, especially through face-to-face interviews, could be constrained by their vulnerability and fear of any social and professional risks. Hidden or hard-to-reach participants could be ‘more hesitant to identify themselves to researchers. Social risks include loss of status, privacy, or reputation if others learn about’ their involvement (Ellards-Gray et al., 2015, p. 67).

To maintain DSU faculty members’ privacy during interviews, each participant was interviewed in her own office. I provided explanatory information sheets and consent forms in advance of the interview, in order to give participants time to read and sign them, to ensure that they had considered the content and were happy to proceed. Also, giving the participants the choice to be off-record made them feel more comfortable when expressing their ideas and perceptions.

3.6.4 Research sample

All the participants in the present study were Saudi females, who were born and raised in Saudi Arabia. The study's interviews were conducted with seven leaders and 18 lecturers (Table 3.1). A specific population for the study sample was purposefully applied, namely qualified, Saudi, female academics and leaders, currently working at DSU. According to Bryman (2012:418), purposeful sampling is "essentially strategic ... entailing an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling". This means that a participant sample "purposefully inform[s] an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2013:156). In the present study, the selection of a sample of DSU faculty members was associated with the research problem and with the questions the study explored, namely Saudi female perspectives concerning leadership ethics in Saudi HEIs. As Bryman (2012:416) explained, "research questions should give an indication of what units are to be sampled".

This study's participants were recruited via written invitation, and by employing the snowball sampling technique from those who agreed to participate. In a snowball sampling, the participants introduce the researcher to others who are willing to participate in a piece of research. This approach was helpful as it was not easy to acquire willing participants for the study. Gathering responses from different leaders and lecturers in different positions and age groups, and with different educational backgrounds and experience exposed various views and opinions. Formal access to each college/department to conduct the research was primarily arranged through the dean of college and head of school/department office holders. Both the participant information sheet and the consent form provided to the participants were translated into Arabic, in order that they were fully understood by the individuals concerned. The observation process took place once permission was obtained from the head of school. In order to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality, the participants were given code names.

No	Code	Job title	Qualification	Years of experience	Gender
1	001	Lecturer	MA	+7	Female
2	002	Lecturer	MA	+9	Female
3	003	Lecturer	MSc	+6	Female
4	004	Lecturer	MA	+9	Female
5	005	Lecturer	MSc	+5	Female
6	006	Lecturer	MA	+8	Female
7	007	Assistant Professor	PhD	+11	Female
8	008	Lecturer	MA	+4	Female
9	009	Lecturer	MSc	+4	Female
10	010	Lecturer	MA	+6	Female
11	011	Lecturer	MA	+5	Female
12	012	Lecturer	MSc	+3	Female
13	013	Lecturer	MSc	+5	Female
14	014	Lecturer	MA	+5	Female
15	015	Lecturer	MA	+3	Female
16	016	Lecturer	MA	+4	Female
17	017	Assistant Professor	PhD	+8	Female
18	018	Lecturer	MSc	+7	Female
19	019	Head of Department	PhD	+5	Female
20	020	Director	PhD	+19	Female
21	021	Dean	PhD	+27	Female
22	022	Head of Department	PhD	+6	Female
23	023	Dean	PhD	+22	Female
24	024	Head of Unit	PhD	+17	Female
25	025	Dean	PhD	+15	Female

Table 3.1 Overview of the participants interviewed.

3.7 Data collection

The data for this research was primarily collected through interviews, meetings, and observations, together with the taking of field notes. As Creswell (2013) recommended, a blend of data collection methods helps to ensure a holistic description and an in-depth understanding of the matter concerned.

3.7.1 Interviews

This research conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 25 female leaders and academics at DSU as part of its data collection process, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic concerned. According to Shah (2004:552), “interviewing is perceived as a participative activity to generate knowledge, [it is] a two-way learning process, where the subjectivities of the research participants influence data collection and the process of ‘making meaning’”. The interviews for this study were conducted across various college sites, within one case study DSU. All the participants were interviewed within their work hours.

The interview guide employed for the interviews was formulated according to the study’s objectives, and to the extant gaps in the literature, such as the socio-cultural interpretation of ethical/counterproductive leadership practices. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:2) noted, “[an interview] goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views in everyday conversations, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach, with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge”. Research interviewing is therefore appropriate for exploring sensitive topics that the participants may not be willing to discuss in a group setting (Gill, et al., 2008). Moreover, I believed that the use of interviews would reveal interesting stories of the ‘lived’ experience of the participants that would reflect the voices I was seeking to address. According to Byrne (2004:182), “qualitative interviewing has been particularly attractive to researchers who want to explore voices and experiences which they believe have been ignored, misrepresented or suppressed in the past”.

3.7.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

The use of semi-structured interviews was considered to be suitable for this study, as they facilitate an in-depth understanding of participants’ interpretations of their individual experience. As Silverman (2006:116) explained, “interviewees and interviewers [are] always actively engaged in constructing meaning”. In total, 25 semi-structured interviews were employed to capture the views of each participant, especially previously silenced

voices. As a researcher, I was interested in the female faculty members' understanding of ethical leadership practices from their lived experience in their workplace context.

A primary reason for selecting the use of semi-structured interviews was that they facilitate the study of emotional and sensitive subjects (Barriball and While, 1994), and are therefore appropriate settings to explore the meaningful issues expressed by the participants (Cridland et al., 2015). While semi-structured interviews are perceived as an informal method of interviewing (Wengraf, 2001), the researcher has the significant responsibility of creating the central questions of the discussion. As Turner (2010) explained, such interviews should be prepared according to a researcher's previous knowledge of the initial areas of the phenomena that require exploration.

3.7.1.2 Interview guide

An interview guide was prepared in early stages of this study, and was designed to encompass the questions and issues to be discussed during the interviews (see Appendix A). As Patton (2002:343) noted, an interview guide is helpful "to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed", offering "topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject".

The form taken by an interview guide should be flexible and loose (Tunner, 2010), in order to allow conversation between the researcher and the participant during the interview. When formulating the questions in the interview guide, the researcher should be mindful that they are not leading questions, and that they are clearly communicated (Cridland et al., 2015). According to Kallio et al. (2016:54), an interview guide covers two levels, "main themes and follow up questions". They explained that the main themes cover the core aspects of the research and guide the participants to express their experience in relation to the main issues and topics of interest to the researcher, while the follow up questions should maintain the flow of the interview dialogue. These follow-up questions could be pre-formed or spontaneous and unplanned, according to the responses of interviewees (Tunner, 2010).

3.7.1.3 Interview process

All of the interviews were conducted face-to-face with a total of 25 faculty members at DSU, all of whom were female Saudi academics and leaders. Each of the participants agreed to participate, and signed the interview consent form (see Appendix C). The interview time and location was arranged with the participants before each interview, and a follow-up reminder

email or text message was sent to them the day before their interview. I began sending these reminders because on three occasions at the beginning of the data collection process, I received a cancellation from participants on the agreed day of the interview. The heads of departments of four schools requested that an emailed list of possible dates and times for interviews was sent to their faculty members.

Each time I passed through the university's gate and as soon as I entered the buildings' doors, I was stopped by the security guards and required to present some sort of identification. The male guards on the main gates asked me to show them my university ID card, and since I do not have one, I showed them my national ID card instead and explained to them the reason for coming to the university. On campus, in order to go through the buildings' doors, the female guards would check the official letter I received from the Dean of Research Ethics Committee for obtaining data collection. I had to also give details on which departments I am aiming to go to and for how long I am staying in the building.

The interviews lasted for a minimum of 40 minutes, and a maximum of one hour, depending how long it took for the participants to discuss the issues concerned. Each participant was interviewed in their own office for privacy reasons. All of the participants were provided with an explanatory information sheet and consent form in advance of the interview, in order to give them time to read and sign it, to ensure that they had considered the content and were happy to proceed. The consent form (see Appendix B and C) explained that their participation was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw at any time, and without providing a reason.

Before each interview, I built rapport and reciprocity with the interviewees to minimise any discomfort they may feel, and to address any concerns. Most of the interviewees offered me Arabic coffee (*Qahwa*) and dates, a traditional Saudi gesture of hospitality towards guests. I began the interviews by welcoming the participant and expressing my appreciation for their participation. I then restated the voluntary nature of their participation, and reiterated the measures taken to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the data collected. In total, 17 of the 25 participants refused permission to be recorded, and I was therefore required to both ask the questions and take as many notes as possible during the non-recorded interviews.

Recorded interviews are helpful for researchers, as they enable them to "concentrate on taking strategic and focused notes rather than attempting verbatim notes" (Patton, 2002:383).

While some of the DSU participants refused permission to be recorded, they were nevertheless comfortable expressing their opinions and discussing the topic under investigation. As Al-Yateem (2012:33) observed, there may be certain advantages to not recording interviews:

...when conducting interviews for the research study, I noted that when I did not record interviews, communication tended to be less formal, more sociable, and more spontaneous – ordinary conversations with considerable interaction and a sense of ease in the exchange of information.

While this implied a tendency for participants to feel self-conscious when they are recorded, it is also the case that when interviews are not recorded, the researcher's concentration may be distracted by the need to take notes, which is why some interviewers prefer to use recording devices. As Back (2010:23-24) explained, the value of using such devices can be mixed, as a recording device can be,

[e]nabling in the sense that it allow[s] for the voices of people to be faithfully transcribed with accuracy. Paradoxically, the fact that the recorder capture[s] the voice and the precise detail of what informants said mean[s] that social researchers have become less attentive as observers. The tacit belief that the researcher need[s] merely to attend to what was said has limited the forms of empirical documentation.

I commenced the interviews conducted for the present study with general questions, such as the following: Could you talk about your experience at the university? Could you describe your job? Why did you choose to pursue an academic/leadership occupation? These questions were framed to encourage the participants to discuss familiar aspects of the topic under discussion, and instilled a casual, relaxed approach to the interviews. As Yang (2008:128) explained, “the one-on-one interaction between an interviewer and an informant tends to build up the kind of intimacy that is common for mutual self-disclosure”. During each interview, I listened carefully and made efforts to ensure that the discussion developed naturally. At the end of the interview, the participant was thanked for their participation.

3.7.2 Meeting observation

Observation is a tool used to collect qualitative data, and “the process of data generation in observational work suggests that it is located physically in specific sites called ‘settings’ or

‘the field’” (Mason, 2002:88). Observation can be described as “seeing through the eyes of”, in other words, seeing from the perspective of the individuals who are observed, including their relationships, norms, values, and behaviours (Bryman, 1988:61). According to Kumar (1999), non-participatory observation is a form of observation in which researchers are not involved in the situation, for example a meeting, and instead are passive. The observation process can be conducted either overtly or covertly. For the purpose of the present study, I attended the field as an overt observer, as the participants were aware of my identity as a researcher, but also knew that their work tasks and behaviour were not being examined on an individual level, since the information sheet and consent form (Appendices B and D) stated that the observation focussed on relational interactions, not on individuals.

The decision to employ *meeting observation* for this research was informed by several factors. Firstly, the observational instrument suited the study approach and its philosophical orientation, aligning with the exploration of a social phenomenon within its context to capture active interactions and constructions. In addition, the use of an additional tool for the data collection facilitated the use of *triangulation* to ensure a certain level of rigour in the research. When explaining the significance of triangulation, Guba and Lincoln (1981:107) explained

exposing a proposition - i.e. the exercise of an issue or a concern; the validity of some alleged fact; the assertion of an informant - to possibly countervailing facts or assertions or verifying such propositions with data drawn from other sources ... as statistical means are more stable than single scores, so triangulated conclusions are more stable than any of the individual vantage points from which they were triangulated.

Triangulation is also considered to be useful for providing more contextualised findings (Gromm, 2008), and Bryman (2011) emphasised its significance for the field of qualitative leadership studies that tend to be too focussed on interviews as a dominant method for data collection. Moreover, Sutherland (2016) noted that the observation of organisational meetings facilitates the capturing of participants’ leadership interactions, process, and meaning making.

I also choose to employ observation as a second data collection method to fulfil my responsibility as a qualitative researcher, and to explore events in the field, as the process

of observing requires the observer to be in the context under investigation, and consequently enables the reporting of a more meaningful understanding of the matter involved, by contextualising the experience (Bryman, 2011).

3.7.2.1 Observation process

In total, I attended five meetings in five departments at DSU between 21st January and 28th March 2019. The chair of each meeting, namely the head of department, informed me of the meeting in advance via email, text message, or verbally. The deans of the colleges decided that for confidentiality reasons, I should only be permitted to attend departmental level meetings. Before the start of the meetings I observed, the respective head of department was provided with an information sheet and an observation consent form that they were required to sign (see Appendix B and D).

The primary aspects of the meetings I sought to capture were the social interactions and power relations, together with the participation, reactions, and contextual details. For confidentiality reasons, I was only permitted to attend departmental level, not college level, meetings. At the commencement of each meeting, the chair introduced me to the attendees. The five meetings I observed took place in the respective department's large meeting room, which was well-provided with facilities such as Arabic coffee and drinking water. During the meetings, I observed by taking notes, and did not participate or comment during the observation. Each meeting lasted between approximately 30 minutes and an hour.

The observation of the meetings revealed emergent themes related to the DSU leaders' interactions with their faculty members, and their style of communicating in the five different departments. The first theme was the structure of communication between the department and the upper level of leadership, which was observed to be top-down (informing process) and down-top (reporting process). All of the departmental meetings observed employed an agenda that included items that provided information, informed the attendees of decisions made by senior leaders, and invited discussion of issues within the department that required reporting to the upper level of management. The second emergent theme was the social interactions between the attendees, and the faculty members' reactions, which revealed aspects of both agreement and resistance. There were a variety of responses and participations from the lecturers, both explicit and implicit, at each meeting that reflected subjective responses and consequences.

The implicit observation process focuses on facial expressions and non-verbal communication among the participants. This reveals their interactions in certain social and research environments, such as meetings. Green and Thorogood (2010) claim that this observational method for non-verbal data allows the researcher to capture information that might not otherwise be disclosed by participants in the interviews.

In this research, implicit data helps to capture academics' wordless responses to leaders' interactional performance in the meetings. This aims to discover the unspoken lines of communications between the university's heads of departments and academics. It also demonstrates cultural interpretations and local non-verbal communication gestures. In his work, *Interpretation of Cultures*, the anthropologist Geertz (1973) cited an example of non-verbal gesture, the human wink, and explored its relevance in various contexts.

(p:90)

Immediately after each meeting, I reviewed the notes I had taken to check for accuracy and effectiveness. I ensured that the observation notes excluded researcher bias, in order to ensure that pertinent data was obtained from the meetings.

3.7.3 Field notes

Field notes were also taken alongside the interviews and meeting observations. These are observers' notes taken when present in the field to ensure data richness (Bailey, 2006). According to Phillippi and Lauderdale (2017:381), "Field notes are widely recommended in qualitative research as a means of documenting needed contextual information". I took notes when I was present at the research site when arranging time schedules with the participants, as well as before and after the interviews, and during the meeting observations. My field notes included time duration information, the location of the interviews and meetings, and relevant room features. In addition, the field notes recorded the participants' comments, certain facial expressions, and other nonverbal behaviour or emotions. Finally, I noted my various reflective views, including my personal reactions and comments concerning the interviews and meeting discussions. Most of my personal reflections were written directly after each interview and meeting. Such critical reflection encourages the investigator to evaluate their performance and biases (Watt, 2007). The process of reflection helps the researcher to identify their feelings, ideas, and biases and encourages the researcher to assess their performance and improve their interviewing and observation techniques.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis involves “a range of techniques for sorting, organising and indexing qualitative data” (Mason, 1996:7), and Bogdan and Biklen (2003:54) defined qualitative data analysis as “working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others”. The rich nature of the data gathered in a qualitative study allows the researcher to construct a complex and integrative base of analysis (Gollingridge and Gantt, 2008).

The commonly used method for analysing qualitative data of thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data collected in the present study. This form of analysis “is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:6). The process of coding and categorising similar sub-themes evolves to construct a theme. The process does not follow fixed guidelines, rather it “involves a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analysing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing” (ibid.:15).

The choice of the thematic method of analysis for this research facilitated the recognition of the complexity involved in categorising interrelated responses and identifying the main themes. The process of familiarising myself with the data required the reading and rereading of phrases, concepts, and paragraphs to achieve clarity, and to identify and organise the subthemes into relevant themes.

Based on the process of thematic analysis, constitution of codes, sub-themes, and themes does not rely on ‘quantifiable measures’. Instead, it is constructed by the relevance to the research objectives (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 81). According to Bryman (2008, p. 578), this process of analysis lacks ‘an identifiable heritage, or has been outlined in terms of a distinctive cluster of techniques’, and consequently, ‘the themes and the sub-themes are the product of a thorough reading and re-reading of the transcripts or field notes that make up the data’.

The analysis of this thesis’ data, and the process of coding, categorizing the common pattern, and finding themes, could be summed up as ‘a hundred separate pieces of interesting

information will mean nothing to a reader unless they have been placed into categories [...] grouping patterns and items of particular significance' (Bill, 1993, p. 127).

Thematic analysis does not cover one appropriate method of categorizing, reorganizing, and analysing fieldnotes. All written notes, observations, and reflection diaries from the researchers' observed experience in the field are regarded as additional data to the transcripts of interviews, which are the main texts for analysis.

3.6.1 Translation, coding, and identifying themes

3.6.1.1 Translation process

The interviews, both audio-recorded and written, together with the field notes, were transcribed and translated. According to Birbili (2000), collecting data in one language and presenting it in another can help to ensure the trustworthiness of a study and its presentation. It is important to recognise the role of the translator and the active efforts made to reflect the meaning of original text as closely as possible in the translated text (Wu, 2006). As Temple (1997:74) explained, "‘wrong’ translation does not exist, yet there are several versions of translation depending on language and culture". Therefore, the process of translation requires the cultural meaning in the original text to be presented carefully in the translated transcript.

The translation process for this study involved two stages: translation (Arabic to English), then back translation (English to Arabic); both the translation and the review were undertaken by the researcher. The translation stage required a familiarity with the Arabic language, my first language, and a knowledge of the concepts and cultural meanings of the people involved in the study. As Simon (1996:137) noted, "translators must constantly make decisions about the cultural meanings which language carries and evaluate the degree to which the two different worlds they inhabit are ‘the same’".

The second stage of the translation process was *back-translation*, namely the process of translating the target language (English) back into the original (Arabic). Back-translation is important for avoiding the reporting of inauthentic findings, and for assuring semantic accuracy (Maneesriwongul and Dixon, 2004).

3.6.1.2 Coding and identifying themes

Following the translation phase, the coding process was undertaken by reading the

transcripts, noting the relevant codes, and categorising the subthemes. This helps to identify “something important about the data in relation to the research question and represent[ed] some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:82). The process commenced with the reading of the transcripts, as Vaismoradi et al. (2015:103) advised that “the ability to generate ideas and make sense of data depends on researchers’ closeness to data through immersion”. Immersion is achieved by the careful reading of transcripts to recognise key ideas, and in order to gain a familiarity with the main issues and significant data (ibid.).

This was followed by the coding stage, a process of data reduction that identifies key concepts, repetitive ideas, and the main elements involved (Ayres et al., 2003). The process helps to reveal both the overt and covert meanings of the phenomenon under investigation (Vaismoradi et al., 2015). The codes were then classified and organised under subthemes, a process that unifies ideas and codes according to their similarities and differences. Each group of repeated codes became a theme (Morse et al., 2008).

The initial coding identified 23 codes from the data, which were reduced in the next phase to 10 codes, and then to three main themes that addressed the research questions. A draft of the coding process is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Coding and identifying similar sub-themes.

Codes/sub-codes	Themes/ subthemes	Researcher notes
Regulations Guidelines Procedures Top-down Hierarchy Centralised decisions Bureaucracy	Organisational	Most of participants express their annoyance with loaded instructions that limit leadership flexibility. Following these instructions was ‘assumed’ to prevent leaders from dealing with ethical dilemmas. University (hierarchical) structure with the potential to reinforce ‘fixed’ ethical norms.
Not delegating authority Individuals’ prestigious privilege Ego Gaining more power	Individualistic	Being a leader as a source of privilege and power.

Religion Taqwa - awareness of Allah Islamic ethics of <i>Adl</i> – justice- and <i>musawat</i> – equality <i>Ikhlas</i> – sincerity	Spirituality and religion	Idealism – ethics.
Men versus women Segregation Masculinity Social roles for male/female Afraid of penalties or being judged by others Do not consider female excuses Male leaders would be more considerate Women are logical, detailed, and organised Female jealousy Sensitive Strict and not considerate Not flexible Aggressive environment Work based on male rules Saudi male guardianship Men and cultural expectation	Gender prejudice	Segregation – female-only organisation could create discrimination against women and beliefs that male leaders would be better in leadership The construction of gendered leadership processes in this university reflects managerialist and masculinist practices of female leaders. Adopting masculine behaviours, which the collective sense making attributes to men.
Fixed measurement of HE functions Quality criteria Leadership effectiveness	Quality assurance	Clash of social values (academics and students) and managerial values (leaders).
Traditions Paternalism Ageism Respecting seniority Work allies Courtesy Favouritism	Cultural	Local and social construction.

3.6.2 Reporting, describing the data, and writing the findings chapter

The establishment of the themes was followed by their reporting and the writing-up phase of the research (Braun and Clarke, 2016). The reporting process in a thematic analysis delivers a clear and concise representation of the data across the themes involved (Throne, 2000). The description phase of reporting encompasses a key element of the final data presentation, namely the use of direct quotations taken from the participants' responses. As Nowell et al. (2017:11) noted, "More extensive passages of quotation may be included to give readers a flavour of the original texts". The descriptive stage is followed by the discussion phase, in which the researcher engages with and develops the analytical process to offer an interpretation of the data, together with its implications and their broader meanings within relevant theories in the extant literature (Braun and Clarke, 2016). According to Nowell et al. (2017:12), "The final analysis should create an overall story about what the different themes reveal about the topic".

In the context of the present study, after the research themes and sub-themes were identified, they were reported in the form of a descriptive presentation and the findings chapter was drafted. The findings highlighted both the contradictions and tensions present in the various perspectives, and the differences and similarities in the views of the leaders and academics. The reporting of the findings included quotations from the participants under each theme and sub-theme to exemplify the different perspectives. The themes identified were then discussed in a dialectical fashion in the discussion chapter, including interpretations of the findings informed by the relevant theories presented in the literature review chapter.

3.7 Ethical considerations

3.7.1 Organisation and participant anonymity

In qualitative studies, anonymity is a major ethical consideration (Hookway, 2008; Kelly, 2009; Nespor, 2000; Stewart and Williams, 2005; Walford, 2005; Wiles et al., 2008). Standards of anonymity exist to ensure confidentiality, and to reduce the risk of potential harm to participants. They are incorporated in qualitative codes of ethics, such as those of the American Sociological Association (1999), the British Sociological Association (2002), and the Social Research Association (2003) (Tilly and Woodthorpe, 2011). When discussing the matter of anonymity, Walford (2005:85) explained:

[I]t simply means that we do not name the person or research site involved but, in research, it is usually extended to mean that we do not include information about any

individual or research site that will enable that individual or research site to be identified by others.

This thesis adhered to the ethical standards of anonymity approved by the research ethics committee in the College of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow. Moreover, during the writing up stage, much consideration was given to the need to respect the participants' identities, especially as they belonged to a specific community, namely a female university, and to carefully considers how to represent the female participants' voices in a way that acknowledged them appropriately, but also guaranteed their anonymity. As Mossa (2013:484) outlined:

[I]t is necessary to consider issues around anonymity more deeply when initially designing the research study, especially when conducting qualitative research in small communities, where maintaining anonymity at the same time as projecting participant voice can be a challenging task.

Despite declaring that 'I acknowledge that the participants will be referred to by pseudonym' on the consent form provided to the participants, it was also important to ensure the presence of 'blanket anonymisation', namely the fact that "all people referred to in interview transcripts, field notes, diaries and other data forms, are anonymised at the earliest opportunity (usually, at the point of transcription). Usually, this is done by replacing real names with pseudonyms or relying on initials" (Clarck, 2006:5). This was carefully observed. The participants' names, together with those of the university and the college/departments, were therefore all anonymised in this thesis. As Morse (1998:79–80) explained:

At the beginning of the study (when giving informed consent), the participants are promised anonymity for their participation. The researcher must check carefully that none of the quotations used [in publication] makes a speaker recognisable through some contextual reference. He or she must ensure that demographic data is presented in aggregates, so that identifiers (such as gender, age, and years of experience) are not linked (making individuals recognisable) and are not consistently associated with the same participant throughout the text, even if a code name is used. This prevents those who know all the participants in the setting from determining who participated in the study and who did not.

In a small community, or a specific research context, such as a women's university, the "voices of those small states may well be more clearly heard, and best captured, by innovative and more context-sensitive approaches to the research enterprise" (Crossley, 2008:249).

3.7.2 Confidentiality of the participants

Ethical issues appear in different phases of the research process (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative study where researchers focus on a particular context and a small number of participants, raises "the question of identifiability, confidentiality and privacy of individuals" (Cohen et al., 2011:542).

Before commencing the data collection for the present study, approval to conduct the research was obtained from the University of Glasgow's Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix E). The approval letter and a number of documents of consent to conduct the research, including the interview guide, the participant information sheet, the interview consent form, and the meeting observation consent form were included in the final thesis documentation. As Kvale (1996:112) explained, consent "entails informing the research subjects about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design". For the purpose of the present research, I followed the University of Glasgow's Lone Working Procedure and Research Further guidelines to minimise risks to myself and the participants. After obtaining ethical approval to conduct the study, a letter of approval to conduct the research at DSU was authorised by the research ethics committee at DSU. A copy of this letter was sent to the college deans, along with the study's information sheet and other consent documents.

The ethical considerations of a research process are primarily the researcher's responsibility (Merriam, 2009). As a female Saudi academic, I considered the cultural sensitivity aspects of this research. Although the subject of the study itself was not considered to be sensitive, I reflected that the participants may be sensitive about discussing their experiences if they had encountered negative behaviours from others in their workplace.

To minimise any potential discomfort during the interviews, the participants were first required to read the participant information sheet and consent form to understand the purpose of the study and the fact that their privacy and confidentiality would be protected, together

with their right to withdraw at any time. The documents also highlighted that their participation was voluntary, and would not impact their relationship with their superiors or colleagues. Secondly, at the outset of the interviews, I sought to build rapport and reciprocity with the participants to minimise any potential discomfort. The participants were regularly reassured that they were not being examined or scrutinised in any way. As there was a dependant relationship between the employees and the leaders, I also reassured the interviewees that their participation was purely voluntary and was not influenced, required, or authorised by anyone in their workplace. In both the interviews and meeting observations, the participants were aware of my identity, research topic, and purpose. In addition, I assured the participants that no aspect of their work tasks or behaviour was under personal examination.

3.7.3 Trustworthiness

During the data collection and analysis process, it is important that the researcher ensures the credibility and trustworthiness of the research process (Tracy, 2010). Credibility concerns the ability to connect the study results with reality, and to express the truth of the findings (Tracy, 1995). As Rubin and Rubin (2012:67) explained, “credibility comes not just from who you interview and how well you check what they say, it also comes from showing readers how carefully you have carried out the research”. According to Richardson (2000:254), the trustworthiness in the expression of reality in a qualitative approach depends on “a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the ‘real’”.

One of the main components in achieving credibility is *thick description* (Geertz, 1973). In order to acknowledge the complexity of the data in a qualitative study, researchers must present sufficient detail, as “things get bigger, not smaller and tighter, as we understand them” (Gonzalez, 2000:629). In qualitative research, credibility through the use of thick description is achieved by explaining all the stages of the research, and the data collection process and analysis, as well as providing a clear description of the ethical considerations throughout the research process.

In addition to detailed descriptions, *Immersion* is important for ensuring research credibility. As Tracy (2010:843) explained, “Learning a culture’s basic vocabulary and grammar skills is one thing, and understanding its tacit jokes and idioms is an entirely more difficult feat. Hidden assumptions and meanings guide individuals’ actions whether or not participants explicitly say so”. Therefore, the importance of noticing and understanding cultural norms

and values not only concerns what individuals say, but also the unsaid (ibid.). This contextual understanding facilitates the identification of relevant implicit views and issues in the local interactions and behaviour. In the context of the present study, certain key words appeared in the findings that were retained in their original Arabic, because they were associated with the culture of the participants, and may have lost their true meaning if they were translated into English.

Another crucial element of credibility in qualitative research is *triangulation*. This concerns the collection of data using multiple methods to exclude the bias of subjectivity (Bloor, 2001). Each data collection tool differs in the degree of richness it adds to the findings, as “all research findings are shaped by the circumstances of their production, so findings collected by different methods will differ in their form and specificity to a degree that will make their direct comparison problematic” (ibid.:385). The use of triangulation reflects the complex reality of the attempt to explain the ambiguity of human behaviour and the complexity of phenomena beyond single standpoint. As Tracy (2020:848) explained, “Multiple types of data, researcher viewpoints, theoretical frames, and methods of analysis allow different facets of problems to be explored, increases scope, deepens understanding, and encourages consistent (re)interpretation”.

The present study’s credibility was enhanced by the use of triangulation in the form of the three tools employed to collect the data: interviews, meeting observations, and field notes.

3.8 Methodological limitations of the research

This research included three main methodological limitations, related to the study sample. Firstly, the sample included a smaller number of leaders (seven participants) than academics (18 participants). Since the study aimed to highlight the significance of the academics’ voice and perspective of leadership, it was initially intended that between 10 and 15 leader participants would be sought. However, due to the challenges involved in reaching and contacting these leaders, it was only possible to collect data from seven individuals in leadership positions.

Secondly, it was challenging to recruit senior level leaders to improve the variety of the sample, due to constraints in contacting individuals at the top leadership level at DSU, which were greater than those involved in contacting leaders in middle level roles. Although the

inclusion of a variety of leaders in the study sample, such as the university's rector or vice presidents, would have enriched the data collected, this study targeted the nature of the relational aspects of leadership in leaders connected with faculty members. Hence, the responses of the leaders at middle leadership level, such as deans, directors, and heads of department, was more relatable to the academics' reactions, due to the nature of their collegial interactions and relationships.

Moreover, since this research was single case study in one city in Saudi Arabia, it cannot be considered to be representative of the HE sector of Saudi Arabia as a whole. While, due to its female leadership, DSU is a unique context in the country, it can only be considered to represent patterns of leadership among female sections of segregated organisations in Saudi Arabia across various sectors.

3.9 Summary

This chapter addressed the purpose of the present study, discussing the research paradigm and research method design employed to address the research objectives. The first part of the chapter justified the choice of the social constructionist paradigm used for the study, explaining the nature of its philosophical approach and the ontological and epistemological assumptions of an integrated paradigm that combined a critical, sociological, and feminist perspective. The interrelated assumptions and mutual concerns regarding power, gender, and ethics that are embedded in a social context and seek social change were discussed under each of these lenses. The role of power and reflexivity was then presented, alongside the researcher's efforts to maintain a reflexive stance during the data collection and analysis process. The chapter also discussed the research method employed for the study, namely a qualitative case study, and method of data collection employed, namely interviews, observations, and field notes. The data analysis process, namely thematic analysis was also detailed, including the transcribing and translation stages, together with the identification of codes and themes, and the subsequent reporting of the findings. Finally, the ethical considerations of the study, including both the procedural and contextual ethics, were explored, and the limitations of the study explored.

Chapter Four

Perceptions and social tensions on ethical leadership and its counterproductive outcomes at Saudi DSU

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the empirical findings of the thesis. Thus, it identifies and explores the perceptions, as well as the reactions, of female leaders and academics at DSU. The purpose is to bring out their most important views on ethical leadership issues and to reveal a range of counterproductive responses. The research conducted for this thesis shows the extent to which insights on leadership and real practice, that are perceived to be ethical, positive, progressive or advantageous by leaders, can be simultaneously perceived as counterproductive by lecturers. From the data, three dominant themes were extracted that serve to shape the dialectical construction of ethical/counterproductive leadership practice (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). These are discussed below.

First, the leaders and academics discussed what their definition of ethical leadership was. Their comments revealed a clear sense of hypothetical understanding of conventions in their descriptions and meaning-making. This theme highlights how important it is to understand that participants may have contradictory individualistic views of leadership including differing views on leadership characteristics and their presumed ethical traits, skills and spiritual values.

Second, since the construction of ethical leadership is mainly at the theoretical level, ethical/counterproductive dialectics are mirrored in leadership practices at DSU and co-constructed within the organisation itself. Participants identified how hierarchical and institutional power create counterproductive leadership practices that are justified ethically through university structures, managerial regulations and quality standards.

Third, the participants' cultural justifications and rationalisations on ethical/counterproductive leadership understandings are shaped through social processes, interactions and experiences within Saudi socio-cultural reality. This theme captures persistent views on paternalism, traditional and local norms and gender biases.



Figure 4.1 Findings: Core themes.

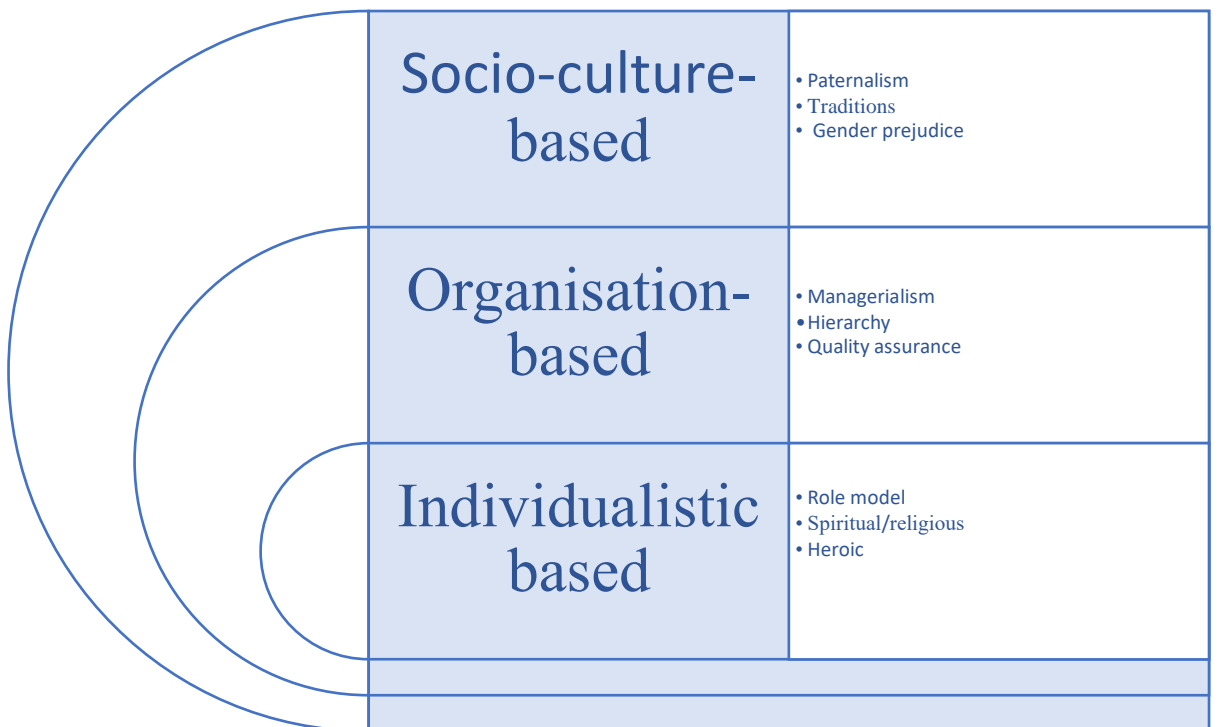


Figure 4.2 Findings: Core themes and subthemes.

4.2 Research objectives and themes

4.2.1 Research Objective (1):

To explore how constructions of ethical leadership are created and justified by both female leaders and female academics within DSU

Asking both leaders and academics about their views on leadership and what ethical leadership means to them revealed traditional understandings about leadership which focus on the individual leader and their positional authority. The sub-sections within this theme were grouped under the following three subthemes: The role model, the spiritual figure and the heroic leader. These three subthemes were drawn from the clusters created within the interview data regarding the participants' views on the leaders themselves, their character, their moral inclinations and behaviours. The three subthemes interrelate with other themes and subthemes (e.g. socio-cultural and gender aspects), which means that any individualistic aspect is not detached from its socially constructed elements.

The relevance of the perceived role of the 'individual leader' when understanding leadership and ethics from the participants' perspective reveals both the optimistic and the dark side of leader-centred power. In describing the ethical leader, many leaders and followers referred to the concepts of role modelling, religious virtues and heroic traits and skills (e.g. charismatic qualities and ability to be passionate). The data also highlighted unethical and negative individualistic traits that many of the participants mentioned during the interviews, such as rigid, self-centred and narcissist traits (e.g. being selfish and lacking empathy). Most of the lecturing staff were generally more critical on the topic of leaders' individuality and power, as detailed below.

4.2.1.1 *The role model*

The concept of being a role model appears in the findings as a definition of ethical leadership. Several participants - both leaders and staff - linked the concept of leadership with the concept of being a role model and considered the meaning of *Qiadah* - leadership - generated from *Qudwah* - role model - to be relevant to their evaluation of leaders and their behaviour. In the data collected, five participants linked the fact that leaders are role models to the fact that this could be used to influence employees' ethical behaviour. The participants presented a number of descriptions of how this ethical 'role modelling' could be played out. From a senior position, Participant 023, for example, described ethical leaders as having unique moral traits which make them role models and emphasised how role modelling is essential to any ethical leadership.

Being a leader is to be a Qudwah – a role model. [L023, Head of Unit]

In order to be an ethical leader and role model, I have to show how ethical I am. I come to work early just to show employees that I come on time. They noticed that I work even more than fixed work hours, so they started to do the same.
[L023, Head of Unit]

The quotation above taken from Participant 023's transcript captures the fact that she believes that her commitment to work ethics made her, in her own view, a positive 'role model' and influence on her employees. From her own experience, this participant explained how she had succeeded in leading divisions within the university by using role modelling. This leader claimed that leaders have a responsibility to display ethical behaviours in order to encourage their subordinates to mimic their behaviour. According to her perspective, employees are looking for a role model to show them how to take work ethics seriously. This participant explained that one way she was acting as a role model was by making sure to turn up to work on time and show her employees that she was open to working over fixed work hours to encourage them to do the same and make the whole team achieve goals even beyond work hours. She believes that what makes her an ethical role model is her professional attempts to ensure that her subordinates were punctual and to influence their sense of integrity. According to Participant 023, the ethical behaviours of her staff increased as a direct result of her own role modelling influence. She went on to say:

I work as a leader not a manager. One division was directed by a manager who led by divide and conquer. My employees distinguish the difference between me and her since unity and morality of the group increased when I became the leader of this division. [L023, Head of Unit]

Participant 023 believes that her success in leadership is contingent upon her being an effective and appropriate role model for her staff members instead of just managing them. She mentioned during the interview that being leader is different from being a manager who hinders the sense of morale within their team. A leader, according to her leadership experience, is also a role model who 'unites' people to work toward set goals. Unity here is created by a role model leader as there is a single vision - the leader's vision – of a work goal. This creates harmony within the group. In her opinion, construction of morale and the

creation of an ethical environment depends on the role model leader and employees remain passive or react on the basis of the ethical influence of their leader.

Similarly, Participant 022, another senior figure, expressed the importance of being an ethical ‘role model’ to followers, using an idiom to clarify her point of view:

An Ethical leader is the Qudwah –role model-:

إذا كان رب البيت للدف ضارباً ف شيمه اهل الدار الرقص

-Meaning: If the leader fails to follow the rules, what should we expect from subordinates? [L022, Head of Department]

This participant justifies her view that leaders are real examples for followers because they exemplify clear and widely valued ethical principles. She described the teaching and learning process involved in being an ethical role model which mainly focuses on following rules without necessarily participating in shaping them, or questioning where they come from or how they would affect people at work. From her point of view, ethical leaders ‘show’ how they respect instructions in order to make employees ‘follow’ their lead. Leader 022 points out that creating an ethical climate depends on the way leaders promote ethical conduct to employees aligned with rules and procedures, including those originating from beyond their organisations.

The binary of leader/follower and active/recipient reflects how these two leaders view themselves and have come to regard their leadership activities as effective and ethically oriented, which also implies the assumption that employees are passive and need to be guided in terms of ethics and values. The issue here stems from the leaders’ lack of awareness about the social aspects of their leadership and ethical behaviour. As evident in the two leaders’ responses noted above, some leaders consider only a single outcome of role modelling, which is that employees become ethical recipients of received wisdom.

However, there are different perceptions among employees. Their reactions and responses reached well beyond the leaders’ simplistic view of role modelling. The data showed that there are certainly employees who follow or choose to view leaders as role models. Also, there are employees who view their leaders as being counterproductive and destructive. Acknowledging a wider spectrum of follower reactions to leaders who consider themselves to be ethical role models reveals several contradictory outcomes. For example, Lecturer 007

spoke about how one leader who worked as Dean of College was a ‘true’ ethical role model because of her social empathy toward employees. She explained the way she chose a leader as role model:

For the last two years, the dean was connected with her employees in the good and bad days. She was a great example of leadership because she balanced work demands and listened to us compassionately. She created a united group in workplace. I never said ‘no’ to her because she helped me and other staff in different aspects by listening to our concerns and finding possible solutions.
[Lecturer, 014]

This respondent clarified how an ‘ethical’ role model reached their employees through compassion and social consideration. Participant 014 also observed the importance of social and ethical relationships between leaders and employees. She noted that maintaining a professional and social balance leads to leaders being perceived as ethical by their subordinates. This lecturer emphasised that a true ‘ethical’ example of leadership is associated with leaders’ connection and communication with their teams and their healthy social relationship in the workplace. According to Participant 014, the impact of leaders’ social skills and strong collaboration with faculty members creates a sense of reciprocity, since academics appreciate leaders’ efforts and their ethical responsibility to encourage healthy relationships.

However, this was a minority view among the staff members interviewed for this study. The majority seemed to be critical of the notion of accepting leaders as role models. For example, two of the participants emphasised the role of power and ego on leaders’ behaviour and their own self-centred concerns. One of these participants claimed:

Many leaders that I worked with for years in this university acquire leader status just for the prestigious privilege that feeds their ego. [Lecturer, 009]

Participant 009 clarified this at interview, explaining that she was a close friend to three lecturers before they moved into leadership positions. They talked about making changes in the department and college once they became leaders.

The only change I witnessed is how they became different people to me; they are self-centred and less friendly. [Lecturer, 009]

According to this participant, people desire high-ranking positions in order to be regarded as role models who can change and develop the situation within both the college and the university for the better. Yet, being in a position of authority changed their behaviour in the eyes of previous friends and colleagues, and encouraged them to focus on their own interests. Although these leaders may assume that they actively behave in a moral manner, especially those who view themselves as role models to others, they simultaneously seek attention which could lead to manipulation.

Similarly, Lecturer 002 believed that a crucial consequence of obtaining a leadership position is that many leaders overlook their academic role and eschew responsibilities at that level to focus on activities that are considered to be commensurate with their higher position and new status.

Many leaders forget about their academic role once they become leaders... Some of them refuse to be lecturers again. They want to stay in leadership positions. Once they are appointed as leaders, whether at college level or higher levels, they become detached from their experiences as academics and disregard all their ideas for change for academics and students that they used to talk about before. [Lecturer, 002]

This perspective helps to explain a leadership tendency towards work alienation. Although leaders in this university have experience in academia, some tend to dichotomise their leadership role and academic role. The desire for power, control and guiding others is associated with a leadership position which makes many lecturers believe that colleagues who become leaders seek personal gain and a desire for personal aggrandisement. Yet, leaders seem to focus on their desire for ‘change’ and capacity to influence followers to achieve a common goal, reproducing conventional prescriptive leadership theory. While some faculty members may perceive themselves as being ‘role models’, or seek to be regarded as such, others seem to view them as self-centred and increasingly remote or aloof.

4.2.1.2 The spiritual/religious leader

The responses of some of the participants revealed spiritual and religious interpretations when they were talking about their definition of ethical leadership. The personal and individualistic view of spirituality values focuses on the leaders' faith and connection to the sacred power of *Allah* – God. According to two of the leaders, religion guides the moral principles of leaders and helps them to behave appropriately and prevents them from engaging in unethical behaviour. For example, one participant claimed confidently that:

Ethical leaders have a high level of self-control and are religiously aware of Allah's existence, they know Allah is watching them....As it is stated in Quran: {did he not realise that Allah is watching} (Surah Alhaq 14). Taqwa Allah is a basic value of an ethical leaders. It keeps them conscious of consequences of good or harmful behaviour. [Director, 020]

Director 020 here creates a view of leaders, including herself, as being under-control and aware of their moral values and obligation to *Allah*. According to this participant, leaders are moral agents because of their moral duties and responsibilities as they fulfil *Allah's* obligations. This means ethical responsibility is triggered by the internal religious value of *Taqwa* - being conscious of *Allah* - as a main principle in Islamic ethics teaching. Director 020 mentioned in the interview that leaders' *Taqwa* and *Allah*-fearing create a sense of responsibility to others in the workplace and provides ethical guidance to assess the behaviour of leaders. This virtue helps differentiate right from wrong behaviour, as stated by the interviewee, which means it distinguishes ethical leaders from unethical ones. However, this perspective emphasises leaders' morality and what they view as right or wrong based on their own views and principles. It is unclear how leaders' ethical and religious morals impact on their behaviour and the consequences for daily social interaction with their subordinates. The link is not as clear cut or deterministic as the interviewee suggests. A religious principle such as *Taqwa* is viewed here only from the perspective of the leader themselves and seems to be taken for granted as an assessment of ethical behaviour without an assessment of how it translated in the practice of leadership.

In a similar vein, Dean 025 described the link between ethical leadership and *Ikhlās* – the sincerity principle. Dean 025 explained that an ethical leader's *Ikhlās* purifies her intention to achieve credibility in her work.

Ethical leadership is associated with a leaders' intention of Ikhlas –sincerity - and it is placed in the heart. Sometimes employees in my department judge me as I look like a straightforward and professional person, but I always keep Ikhlas – sincerity - in workplace as a priority and eventually they understand me. From my experience, I learned to keep focused on getting work done, people talk and judge anyway whether good or bad, it doesn't matter! What matters is getting work done. [Dean, 025]

Reflecting on Dean 025's view of *Ikhlas* - sincerity - she emphasised that an ethical leader should be honest to *Allah* and work without being concerned with people's judgment. This means her work responsibility and personal link with *Allah* is most important than her relationship with employees. According to her, practicing sincerity in work, makes leaders aware of their intentions and ensures that they behave ethically without taking others' opinions into consideration. This perspective demonstrates a tendency among several leaders to focus on their own interpretation of religious principles such as *Taqwa* and *Ikhlas*. This is evident in the way they simplify ethical behaviour and its positive consequences as a one-dimensional personal matter rather than a collective issue that takes employee views and experiences into account. For example, Dean 025 explained that subordinates and colleagues could judge her behaviour negatively, but still she believed that being focused on work and accomplishment will lead to progressive results.

However, in the complex social reality of Saudi HE, leaders encounter ethical dilemmas and differ in the way they ethically rationalise such conduct. Leaders could turn to a religious verse to validate their understanding of ethical conduct yet, in practice, assessing the behaviour and social reactions of the people who work with them is a more complex undertaking. Two lecturers explained their views on the importance of understanding an Islamic view of ethics instead of traditionalist leaders' (mis)interpretations of the meaning and significance of ethics. Lecturer 015 expressed the view that some leaders justify their actions on the basis of fear of *Allah*, as illustrated in the quote below:

Most people believe that ethical means spiritual and religious. They would say, for example, Ettaqi Allah - be afraid of Allah, but to me an ethical person can be known by people who work with them, the way she treats others, not by her religious practice because it is something between her and Allah. [Lecturer, 015]

This participant highlighted how many people misinterpret ethical practice in the workplace with religious virtues such as *Taqwa*. From her point of view, ethical behaviour and understanding of religious values should be linked to the social context not the individual level. Lecturer 015 highlighted the importance of colleagues' and other members' assessment of the behaviour of their leaders. This describes how a spiritually based interpretation of leadership could create a sense of separation between individual leaders and their work context. This, could lead to a separation in leaders' minds between what they rationalise as being spiritually ethical and how they behave within social situations that involve power relations between leaders and followers.

Lecturer 011 presented another opinion regarding religious principles. From her perspective, leadership could overlook the main 'social' Islamic ethics, such as justice and equality in the workplace:

Islamic ethics of Adl – justice - and Musawat – equality - should shape our leadership. They are the main principles to lead in an ethical way and create healthy relationships in the workplace. It is easy for leaders to talk about religious morals but when it comes to practice it is the opposite. [Lecturer, 011]

Participant 011 expressed her view that there is a clear absence of the main Islamic principles in university leadership. She described how ethical values such as justice and equality create a healthy environment that helps to maintain constructive relationships and behaviours. By contrast, some leader's invocations of religion seems to be far more opportunistic than sincere. This could be attributed to their reliance on personal and individual levels of religious rationalisation, which need to be widened to acknowledge and act upon the consequences on others, as subordinates explained. Social and relational ethics of leadership behaviour are significant elements that mainly all of the faculty members and participants of this study recognised.

4.2.1.3 The heroic leader

A significant number of participants reported that they deliberately enact or demonstrate certain prescribed characteristics of leaders, such as being decisive and visionary, in order to be considered ethical by followers and peers. Many perspectives on ethical leadership are linked to leaders' individualistic traits, from having a charismatic character to having interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence. These heroic leader-centric perspectives

evoke the power of leaders in a positive way and deny the negative consequences of their powerful behaviour. For example, a Head of Department (024) explained her definition of ethical leadership as follows:

Ethical is to be passionate about what you do. You cannot separate passion and ethicality. By following that, I want to make change. It is good to leave my position with an elephant footprint. [Head of Department, 024]

This leader discussed the association between ethical and passionate leaders in a way that clearly revealed her individualistic, and rather harsh, conceptualisation of ethical leadership. This view lacks reference points beyond the leaders' interest and dominant opinion about what they perceive to be right and wrong. Her stress on being passionate and her equating of this with a desire for success signals a preoccupation with the self and with self-serving goals. One of a leader's main desires, which this leader acknowledged, is leaving a mark through her work and seeking social status without any explicit inclusion of followers that are simply a means to an end.

Likewise, Participant 004 explained the role of charisma in describing ethical leadership:

Most people in the universities' leadership positions are managers. Leaders are different from managers and they are rare in this university. Managers here do not have charisma to inspire and encourage others. Leaders on the other hand, are charismatic in the way they encourage employees to work creatively and ethically. [Lecturer, 004]

The participant here believes that ethical leaders have a charismatic ability to 'encourage' and motivate followers. She makes a distinction between managers and leaders based on ability to inspire and encourage subordinates. This response demonstrates a conventional understanding of leadership that is separate from reality because it shows simplistic view of ethical leadership and charisma; and disregard consideration to social dynamics complexity. Lecturer 004 believes that issues concerning leadership occur in the university because of the absence of a leader's charisma. From her point of view, leaders have a 'unique' power within their persona to inspire followers' ethical behaviour. The focus here is on leaders' ability to influence others, not on how their influence is perceived. This assumed expectation

that leaders are ethical and that followers are recipients perpetuates the idea that the ethical behaviour of leaders is unquestionable.

However, heroic traits and skills are also seen as problematic by other participants. For example, Lecturer 015 pointed to leaders who seem to be perfectionists, focused on personal desires for success and changed their values to become more self-centred.

The positions of some leaders change their behaviour, including their values, especially if they are perfectionist by nature and have a desire for success. It is difficult to deal with them, they don't welcome criticism and blame others if there are some limitations in the work. [Lecturer, 015]

In a couple of cases, the participants acknowledged that leaders tend to be self-centred and show a lack of concern toward employees. Lecturers appear to be aware of the impact of power on leaders' behaviour. As Participant 015 said, perfectionist leaders appear to be preoccupied with their own success and ignore wider social values. Employees who work with a perfectionist personality suffer from difficulties in communicating and discussing issues of work due to their refusal to face or acknowledge criticism. Considering this insight, leaders who are focused on their own interests cannot appreciate the complexities of social collaboration and others' opinions and reactions to their own behaviour. The perceptions of followers can shape a different narrative of the meaning of successful and ethical leadership as they recognise the role of power on leaders' work behaviour.

While many lecturers seem to be critical towards a leader-oriented view of leadership, other participants consider leaders' interpersonal and communication skills to be significant for leader-follower ethical relationships. Participant 002 illustrated the importance of interaction skills that enable leaders to be more considerate toward their employees:

Ethical leaders respect humankind and they are emotionally intelligent; they have interpersonal skills to listen and understand others. They are vulnerable and strong at the same time. I believe there should be an assessment for emotional intelligent leaders because many women acquire leadership positions without basic social skills. Being part of this faculty, I deal with countless harmful examples of selfish leaders. [Lecturer, 002]

Participant 002 considered leaders' awareness of their and others' emotions as a component of ethical behaviour. Academics appear to be concerned with communicating and having a social relationship with leaders. As Lecturer 002 said, ethical leadership is exposed when the leader is connecting with others, listening to their views and understanding their requirements. Leaders who relate to their subordinates, empathise with their situations and help to solve problems help create a healthy environment in the workplace where employees are able to work better and feel appreciated. The reaction of this participant exposes the challenge faculty members encounter with many self-centred leaders who do not put any effort into developing good relationships and communicating effectively with academics.

In the same vein, Participant 015 stated that leaders' social skills are the basic components of ethical leadership. She explained the significance of relational skills of leaders to magnify the relationship with employees:

It is all about personality characteristics of leaders. True leaders are those who are considerate and flexible in their relationship with followers. They are courageous enough to open up discussions and exchange ideas. At the university, most leaders create boundaries with their work members and when academics need to communicate, they have to go through their secretaries first. That's not decent behaviour, it is insecurity. [Lecturer, 015]

The respondent here identifies traits of ethical leaders, such as being considerate, flexible and brave. Leaders who are people-oriented develop healthy relationships with work colleagues and listen to their concerns. Lecturer 015 distinguished between a brave and insecure pattern of an ethical leaders' behaviour. According to this participant, courageous leaders are willing to communicate effectively and facilitate negotiations with their employees. Leaders with insecurity issues tend to establish boundaries and create a communication gap between themselves and their subordinates. The positive expectations of leaders' competencies, as Participant 015 explained, reflect a similarity in what the staff 'hoped' to see in their leaders. In other words, most of the lecturers who took part in this study mentioned 'considerate' and 'flexible' as characteristics of leaders that they hoped to have and who did not yet exist not within their university.

In addition, the data collected from documentary notes exposed the individualistic approach of leadership training and development at DSU. Training courses on leadership development

at DSU are provided only for leaders. According to the training and development supervisor, there is a special and distinctive department for leadership training courses. These courses are divided on the basis of leadership levels: top, middle and bottom of the university's structure. The top-level training courses focus on visionary and strategic development and are offered to the university's rector and vice directors. It aims to improve decision-making skills. The second type of training is designed for middle leadership. The courses aim to improve leaders' supervisory skills. Finally, departmental level training is designed to develop leaders' communication and administrative capabilities. This training is aimed at head of departments and their assistants.

The Supervisor of Training and Development explained that the Deanship of Training and Development is working on a survey and workshop project that aims to test leadership qualities and skills. According to her, this questionnaire helps to identify effective leaders and the extent to which their characteristics and talents fit in with the university's leadership structure. The programme's focus is on the leader's individualistic orientation and evident capacity for self-improvement. Many workshops, such as those on 'inspiring and influencing others', 'communication skills' and 'creativity and innovation', are leader centred. The training schedule includes courses such as the art of task achievement, improving employee's motivation and productivity, and effective communication and takes an implicit one-way, top-down, leader centric approach.

One of the tests approved in the training program at DSU is the Myers-Briggs' test. This MBTI supposedly indicates personality types and psychological preferences about perspective and decision-making insights (The Myers & Briggs Foundation®, 2020). The logic behind this approach to leadership personality based development is that personality type matters and can be cultivated by focusing on contrasting elements, such as structured vs projective and judging vs perception (ibid). The leadership training approach at DSU endorses this and is very psychology and trait oriented, investing misplaced faith in heroic notions of identifying and cultivating 'the right people'.

Beyond that, executive education programmes held by the INSEAD university are provided to DSU leaders. INSEAD operates across several locations: Europe, North America, Asia and Middle East. It is recognised globally for its MBA program which is ranked by The Financial Times number 1 in the world (INSEAD, 2020). INSEAD provides leadership training programmes for DSU which are considered to be much the same as the programs

developed for several CEOs in the largest companies around the world. These courses are designed for individual leaders from mainstream theories, especially transformational approaches, which indicates further reinforcing of leader-centric and individualistic views of leadership within DSU.

4.2.2 Research Objective (2):

To investigate the dialectics between ethical leadership and counterproductive behaviour in a very distinctive and under researched organisational context

Perspectives on institutional bureaucracy and administrative values and connections with ethics were a key focus in the majority of the participants' responses. All the academics' reactions indicated that they harboured some misgivings with regard to centralised hierarchy, rigid policies and managerial values of leadership. It should be noted that organisational behaviour in the university co-construct managerial and structural values that embodied leadership effectiveness practices to achieve the mission and strategic goals of the university. Within this culture of organisation, levels of leadership effectiveness are dependent mainly on improving academics' productivity. The findings of this research broadly reveal ethical tensions and paradoxical effects from leaders' organisational roles and values; and the shaping of academics' professional responsibilities that are geared to notions of hierarchy and managerial standards. The next section explains the dialectics of ethical and counterproductive leadership behaviour in the organisational context of the university, based on the emergent three key themes arising from the data: managerialism, hierarchical structure and quality standards.

4.2.2.1 *Managerialism*

The majority of participants, especially the academics, expressed their resentment toward the leadership's managerial-oriented behaviours. Competitive forms of managerial behaviour, according to the participants, are increasing year after year, creating a clash between academics and leadership values. Lecturer 001 explained how an organisational-based view of leadership, where leaders are preoccupied with university ends, creates rigid processes that renders leaders' views and behaviours detached from the needs and benefits of the academics and the students:

If we aim to practice ethics in this university, we need to seek students' benefits and academics' freedom and creativity. Instead, our leaders create for us intensive schedules and an administrative workload in order to reach certain criteria of performance. [Lecturer, 001]

The managerial pressure of performance metrics on followers, especially lecturers, reflects a critical role in the daily social and dynamic relationships between leaders and academic faculty. In the interviews, most of the academic staff participants complained about the increased influence of administrative forces on their working conditions. Efficiency key standards such as (a) leadership responsibility and commitment, (b) faculty members' engagement (c) training and development for academics and leaders are reinforced by annual appraisals. While leaders view academics' performance appraisal significant indicator for their work efficiency, lecturers seem to recognise its disadvantages and unfair results. This systematised work environment with limited freedom and autonomy for staff affects the academics' levels of innovation and satisfaction. According to several academics in this university, leaders appear to follow effectiveness and efficiency requirements that are fixed and measurable, and which give them opportunities to control the performance of lecturers. Leaders in these situations dispense with their positional power to work with the system and behave according to operational efficiencies in order to maximise work objectives.

One of the leaders had this to say:

I always remind my employees of their assessment. At the beginning of the academic year, I tell them their assessments are 100% their own responsibility, if they don't work enough. [L022, Head of Department]

This leader believed that efficiency values and academic productivity can be achieved by controlling performance assessments. Preoccupation with measurement and performance indicators are believed to help increase productivity but, in fact, these could easily be created simply to rationalise managers' misbehaviour and employees' dissatisfaction. Leader 022, as indicated above, used her power and position as Head of Department to warn employees about their assessment outcomes. Misused power by leaders is nurtured through behaviours such as threatening employees of appraisal results. The abuse of power appears to be essential in university leadership but the consequence of these results-oriented behaviours

on employees and their response appear, according to other accounts, to be reflective of the abusive side of power. Talking on managerial challenges, Participant 013 added:

Leadership should inspire and guide academics instead of setting all guidelines and follow ups. They should give them space to be creative. [Lecturer, 013]

Participant 013 expressed the view that leaders should help and encourage academics to be creative, instead of just focusing on following managerial targets. Academics' productivity would be likely to improve if they felt that their opinions were being taken into account and that they were able to share ideas and be included in decision making. Yet, leaders themselves are under a lot of pressure to meet senior leadership guidelines which make it harder for them to be aware of their own social behaviour with faculty staff. DSU leaders work with fixed direction of departmental and collegial process and structure associated with leadership effectiveness standards.

Another participant clarified how DSU leaders cope with the privatisation direction in Saudi HEIs. Lecturer 008 explained that academic work is operative and there is no space to be independent. In such an environment, leaders ensure efficiency by monitoring academics' performance targets in response to their supervisory positions.

Saudi HEIs are moving toward privatisation. The approach of public administration of university's leadership is tremendously changed. Our work as lecturers became more operational and under the pressure of performance measures, guidelines and promotion standards. I am planning to change my academic career and I know several lecturers will do the same. Many of us are having second thoughts about pursuing a PhD degree and on continuing in this hostile environment. [Lecturer, 008]

Participant 008 explained how the direction of HEIs privatisation triggered a change in the university's leadership, culture and goals. She described how a more aggressive and competitive university culture pushed lecturers to leave their academic careers. Leadership practiced within this managerial logic seeks to increase control over academic work and this adds extensive pressure on the role of the academic. Turnover intention comes as a result of a toxic work environment where the leaders' goal-oriented behaviour has negative consequences on academics' satisfaction and wellbeing.

4.2.2.2 A top-down university structure

Most participants acknowledged the distance in hierarchal relations between leaders and academics. They conceded that the top-down structure was legitimate and justified leadership power, yet it ignored academics' voices. According to Lecturer 006, existing hierarchal relationships create obstacles that preclude academics from voicing their views and participating in decision making.

In a hierarchal workplace, the higher leaders get, the harder they are to reach

[Lecturer, 006]

One of the issues evident in the data is the way in which a university authoritarian structure influences the type of environment where staff is expected to obey the top leaders' instructions and how this creates a chasm between leaders and subordinates. Participants recognise that one-way communication creates distance between leaders and academics, as Lecturer 009 explains:

From my experience in this university, most leaders keep a distance between themselves and subordinates. If they want something from us - academics - they send their secretaries to communicate with us. Leaders stay in their huge private offices and do not communicate face to face with people, only in meetings.

[Lecturer, 009]

This participant highlighted the communication failure between leaders and academics and how leaders create boundaries that prevent direct interactions with them. In fact, the distance perpetuated through hierarchical structures engendered top down relationships with employees. Another participant complained about decision making processes that are operated strictly by top level management level.

Centralised decisions, this is how leaders argue if we try to negotiate our views.

[Lecturer, 012]

However, Head of Department 019 mentioned that listening to academics is part of her job as a leader. This underlines the importance of a dialectical understanding of workplace conduct and relationships as discussed in the following chapters. The point to note here is

that this formal leader explicitly notes that taking academics' feedback into consideration is part of her function and that it is also her job to channel this feedback to the leaders at the top:

I listen to lecturers' views and feedback. I always tell them that your suggestions will be raised with the leaders at the top. [Head of Department, L019]

Heads of Departments at the university have direct communication and regular meetings with subordinates, although not everyone agrees on the impact of such meetings in terms of communication, consultation, involvement and empowerment. Such meetings are mostly held to inform lecturers about decisions and updated regulations that have already been made by the leaders at the top. Some, however, as Participant 019 acknowledges, attempt to create a consultative environment where decisions can be discussed with lecturers and feedback can be given to the leaders. Yet, for most participants, top down regulations are valued by their leaders more than their feedback.

Leaders should be more flexible when it comes to regulations and rules. Instructions are not holy scripture. [Lecturer, 016]

This participant recommended that leaders should not treat principles and procedures as sacred, referring back to earlier comments about religion and leadership rationalisations. Giving full authority to fixed regulations made by leaders at the top ignores how these leadership practices are perceived by academics and students across the university. This creates tensions and underlines the differential assessments of leaders' behaviour toward rules and regulations as guidelines to their own ethical rationalisation. However, the other faculty staff may perceive many practices of these leaders to be unreasonable and ethically questionable.

Findings from the participant observation meetings indicate that there is a top-down structure in communication and decision making. During one observation of a departmental meeting, the Head of Department discussed issues related to an updated regulation on exam timetables with 14 lecturers. The meeting lasted 38 minutes and was held in the Department Meeting room. The Head of Department presented the meeting schedule and indicated the main topic which was the fixed time for mid-term exams. The leader explained this new regulation and

academic staff asked for further explanations. One of the attendees asked if leaders in the College could review this new policy as it was not always fair for academics and students:

Why don't we keep it between lecturers and students? [Attendee, 01]

Another attendee commented:

We are not machines. We are human and during exams some of us have certain circumstances [Attendee,02]

The leaders explained to the attendees that even lecturers had to deal with personal issues, but the exams had to be held. On exam days they did not need to be physically present. I noticed during the observation that three of the attendees were not engaged in the meeting. They seemed to be disinterested, not listening or engaging with the leader's explanation, as if there was no point to it. At the end of the meeting the Chair stated that she welcomed any comments or written suggestions via email and that these would be raised with the Dean but little obvious enthusiasm greeted this suggestion and it seemed more like a standard comment stated at the end of meetings rather than a genuine invitation. Both Chair and staff seemed to consider this option as being a polite convention rather than a means of eliciting and acting on staff contributions to decision making.

4.2.2.3 *Quality assurance and effective leadership demands*

Most of the participants emphasised the pressure to meet quality standards and its influence on creating social tensions between leaders and academics. According to faculty members, the vision of quality achievement appears to drive leadership practice. Participant 004 mentioned that quality measures were treated at the university as a checklist that standardised the quality of the teaching and limited academic freedom:

Leaders are preoccupied with quality and academic assurance. They asked academics to unify exams, so we are not free to teach our subjects ... I feel we are moving backwards. This contradicts my understanding of quality because they deal with it as a checklist. [Lecturer, 004]

However, the Dean of College 021 indicated that quality standards are significant as they help to identify effective leaders who are seeking to meet quality results. The leader here tended to focus on the positive side of the quality requirement, stating:

In my opinion, quality criteria lead to knowing who is effective in leadership and who is not. They have a positive impact because they make everyone work harder in a directive way. Our college proved to be one of the best colleges in the university in terms of quality achievements. [Dean, L021]

The participant believes that quality standards lead to effective leadership results, through internalised direction. From this point of view, effectiveness appears to be associated with meeting fixed quality criteria and leadership is viewed as being effective or not through the top-leaders' lens. As seen earlier, most of the academic participants stated that they felt that emphasising the quality of the strategic vision came at the expense of cooperation with the lecturers' shared values and that this led to unethical and rigid leadership practices. Participants 008 and 012 shared similar views:

Seeking quality is the leaders' priority in this university. All colleges should achieve quality standards no matter how different subjects are. I told the Head of School that fixed standards sometimes do not fit with our subjects and the way we teach students. The response was: we cannot discuss it, it is fixed. [Lecturer, 008]

Participant 008 recounted her discussion with her leader at the College where she expressed her disagreement with the university's approach of taking quality standards as best practice. This lecturer believes that each subject taught at the university requires a different quality approach. Her leader, however, responded that quality criteria are fixed and non-negotiable.

Similarly, Lecturer 012 clarified the staff understanding of the quality direction shift within the university in the last few years:

I have worked in academia for more than 20 years. In the last 5 years, the quality requirement became our main work in this school. I used to teach without fixed standards but now things have been changed. [Lecturer, 012]

Participants suggested that the end result of the quality approach reveals processes of leadership that link rigidly to the strategic vision of the leaders themselves, instead of sharing academics' views and processes of cooperation. As the quality orientation became part of the leadership process at all levels, academics were mainly affected negatively where their work became standard. For the vast majority of staff respondents, senior members of the university leadership mainly forced this work on academics without understanding, or showing a serious concern for, their views and reactions.

4.2.3 Research Objective (3):

To reveal the significance of relational power dynamics and socio-cultural constructions of ethical leadership for employee experiences and workplace behaviour, with particular attention to counterproductive outcomes

Culture appears in the data to be a significant theme that covers participants' perspectives of local contextual configurations on ethics, leadership and the counterproductive practices of leaders. Throughout the interviews it appeared that the participants' views are mainly associated with the wider society and how this affects the meaning-making of leadership. Below are the strongest sub-themes that emerged in the data in response to this.

4.2.3.1 *Paternalistic leadership*

The data indicates some contradictory views on the ethics behind many paternalistic leaders' behaviours. In the data, paternalism emerges in the way that leaders' behaviour has sought to create a 'family' environment and a parental relationship that seemed to require loyalty and obedience from the employees, though with little reciprocity. Most specifically, leaders appeared to ethically rationalise paternalistic leadership as humanistic. For example, Participant 023 explained her style of leadership as paternalistic and Eastern, to illustrate her ethical approach to leading her employees:

I lead as a mother and role model. I am inspired by the Japanese approach of paternalistic leadership because the leader cares for employees as family members and they respect the leader in response [L023, Head of Unit].

According to this leader, creating parental relationships in the workplace is the responsibility of the leaders. They should create a family environment that encourages employees to be loyal. This provides a telling insight and possibly an internalised prescriptive leadership

justification for paternalism as an ethical approach, especially in relation to employees. As in a patriarchal family, the leaders who act like the father figure assume that their subordinates will react in a positive way. The ethical rationality behind the paternalistic approach is to treat employees as family and thus, assume responsibility for the care of and protection of group members. Good subordinates are then expected to appreciate this and express loyalty to, and pride in, their leader.

Two of the academic participants, on the other hand, expressed different views on such paternalistic leadership notions and practices. They explained how leaders tend to behave in paternalistic ways, especially if there is an age gap between them and their employees, as shown in the quote below:

We have a generational division in this university. Leaders act like parents toward us. They ask for respect and loyalty from us. Respecting seniority is part of our culture. This is a problem in university leadership. Some of our leaders, just because they have worked at this university for many years, believe that they deserve leadership positions. I think most of these leaders use this approach because we are younger and we have different ideas. [Lecturer, 006]

In her view, Lecturer 006's response to paternalistic behaviour challenges the ethical insight behind it. The participant emphasised that division between leaders and subordinates is associated with age and seniority. This social order, according to her sense of dehumanised results of paternalistic relationships, contradicts the leaders' protection tendency towards employees. The collectivistic nature of Saudi culture generates certain social norms, such as respecting people from the older generation. Traditionalist leaders appear to treat subordinates from the younger age group in a parental, directive and protective way. Academics, such as Participant 006, resist these traditional approaches and how they are embodied in leaders' behaviour towards them and are seeking fresh and innovative ideas in leadership.

In a similar theme, Participant 014 concedes that leaders' traditional leadership behaviour is a major issue that academics encounter. According to Lecturer 014, leaders in her College adopt the paternalistic approach through their long experience of teaching and apply it in their relationships with employees, especially those of the younger generation.

One of the main issues in our collegial leadership is our leader's old-fashioned views on work processes and relationships with staff. Their belief that they 'raised generations' as educators and students, is similar to their relationship with employees. [Lecturer, 014]

As seen from the quote above, Participant 014 articulated the role of cultural influence on constructing paternalistic leadership practices in DSU. Her paternal leader valued 'educating' subordinates as a matriarch figure requiring loyalty from members of staff, especially people from younger generations. In her view, paternalistic leaders tend to treat employees as 'less experienced'. Faculty members, on the other hand, appear to perceive their conduct as being orthodox and unfair.

The observation notes on a meeting chaired by the Head of Department disclosed these paternalistic patterns in social dynamics. The leader and the 9 lecturers in the meeting were in the same age group. Only lecturers with PhDs can attend Departmental meetings. One of the attendees asked to change her classroom because it required walking to another building and commented that the Department should consider her age. The response of the leader was the oldest and most experienced academics in the College have priority when it came to teaching in the same College building. I noticed the informal relationship between the leader and academics with the same age group in the Department. They seemed to be friends and have common interests. One of the attendees referred to leader as *Umm* - mother of - which means her *Kunya*— teknonym name used by first-born sons to address parents. Using their *Kunya* to refer to someone reflects closeness and respect, in common with men. Traditionalist women are possibly showing familiarity to one another, especially those from the same age group, by calling each other by their *Kunya*.

4.2.3.2 Cultural traditions as ethical norms

An important aspect of participants' responses demonstrated the role of local and traditional norms in shaping some of presumed to be 'ethical' leadership practices. Most of lecturers recognised the unfair treatment they encountered because of a personal connection with the university which they claim is a cultural issue. One of the participants, as shown in the quote below, acknowledged that many leaders treat relatives or people who worked with them for a long time, and shared history with, differently.

In our culture, we have courtesy in the workplace, and wāṣṭah - favouritism / nepotism. Leaders are preoccupied with keeping their network and their suma'a - reputation - from tribal members and close relationships more than they are concerned with their employees' rights and welfare. [Lecturer, 015]

In a truly relational sense, a leader's social connections in the workplace creates support systems for them that helps them maintain their position and power. According to the vast majority of respondents, personal relationships in a collective culture such as Saudi Arabia are mostly prioritised, even in workplaces. When it comes to leadership, some leaders misuse their position to generate these ties through unethical behaviours for their own personal interest and as a form of privilege. The behaviours of these leaders, according to Participant 015, are driven by their concerns with their *suma'a* - reputation - and pride in being perceived to be ethical by their community and extended family members at the workplace. The findings of this study reveal some harmful impacts of these traditional behaviours on faculty members including the reduction of work morale and the potential creation of interpersonal conflicts.

In a similar vein, Lecturer 008 described issues relating to work allies in the university's leadership. This respondent argued that leaders' behaviour was guided by shared values and interests with their allies.

In many Departments and Colleges, you find a group of work allies. They seek higher positions and help each other to be leaders. If one of them becomes a leader, she supports her group or friends. If any academic had to have a conflict with one of her friends, she would not be able to be objective. [Lecturer, 008]

Participants expressed common views on the leaders' informal support group who share the same frame of reference. While relationships and work allies create a feeling of belonging and being honoured or defended by others, Participant 008 called attention to the unethical consequences for other faculty members. Leaders who belong to a friendship group seem to be influenced by their personal opinions when it comes to judgments and are not objective or neutral in their treatment of the other party. Subordinates tend to perceive the leaders' conduct as being counterproductive making them feel helpless and leading them to losing trust in their leader.

Some of traditionalist leaders are motivated by groups that support their avoidance of change and value their conservative approach. For example, Lecturer 003 revealed that some leaders belong to certain groups at the university and can, thus, be alienated, especially if they are *qabili* - tribal and Bedouin - or *hijazi* -from the Hijaz western region of Saudi Arabia- as indicated in the quote below:

I noticed that we have in this university groups which are divided based on tribal background or their place of origin, for example, a leader who from certain ethnic group, hijazi or qabili, supports her members in the same community and holds stereotypes of other groups. This gives her a feeling of sharf -honour- among their tribal group. [Lecturer, 003]

In a patriarchal context, tribal and ethnic regimes continue to bind through favouritism when a person belonging to the group occupies a leadership position. Participant 003 conceded that tribe and kinship identity create alliances with shared interests where each group gives their support. This societal control affects leaders' behaviour and may lead them to misuse power for the sake of group loyalty to boost their feeling of honour *sharf*. Lecturer 003's response highlights the fact that some leaders behave in a superior way because they belong to a certain tribe and favour the allies who come from their own tribe or ethnic group to others in the university. As such, cultural and traditional interpretations of some leaders' rationalisation on ethical conduct could be taken for granted in the context of social or traditional values and norms. Faculty members, however, mainly perceive their behaviour as discriminatory and counterproductive.

4.2.3.3 Gender segregation and internalised prejudice

A major and key aspect that all participants in this study expressed concerns about, knowing how much it influences leadership construction in a gender-segregated university, is the impact of gender on leadership. The majority of participants' perceptions on gender reflected masculine ideologies is rooted in the deeply patriarchal context of Saudi DSU. Gender dualism, where masculine leadership behaviours are culturally approved and the most senior of state and sectoral leaders are men, not women, still applies and influences the conduct of female leadership at more local and institutional levels.

One of the main assumptions revealed by the data is that ethical distinctions between men and women are sustained: some participants viewed men as being more considerate and flexible leaders than women. These cultural notions tend to govern gender dichotomies which reinforce male superiority through the reproduction of discriminatory beliefs. For example, Lecturer 009, describing gendered opposition between female and male leadership behaviours, stated that female leaders are not considerate of female followers' circumstances and tend to anticipate what male leaders would do, making their actions harsher.

Based on my experience here in a women-only university, most of the female leaders are rigid and do not consider female excuses. That's why many of us as academics believe that male leaders would be more considerate. [Lecturer, 009]

Participant 009 suggested that inflexibility and rigid leadership behaviour are associated with most of the female leaders in DSU. When women adopt a direct approach of leadership and display masculine behaviours, they are viewed more negatively than men, especially in a Saudi patriarchal social system. As a result of traditional discriminatory stereotypes, many female subordinates found female leadership to be less desirable. The responses of seven participants linked destructive behaviours of female leaders to their gender. Disregarding the segregation role on such common societal beliefs, these lecturers appear to have self-stereotyped and internalised an oppressive view that was triggered by what they regarded as female leaders' counterproductive behaviour.

When describing difficulties with female leaders, some participants mentioned that they preferred to move to another (male-dominated) Saudi university. They considered male leaders as being more likely to be protective and sympathetic toward female subordinates. Cultural gender-based expectations about Saudi men, as Participants 023 and 004 stated, are that men are better able to lead because they have been raised to be responsible.

Saudi men have been raised to be responsible for women. This is a cultural expectation, that's why many male-leaders are fair, considerate and flexible toward women. [Head of Unit, L023]

Women's role should be executive only. At senior and higher levels, it should be men because they know how to balance their mind and emotions and are more flexible. [Lecturer, 004]

The social expectation that sees men as being responsible and protective of women constructs the social acceptance of masculine and manipulative behaviours by male leaders, not female. This is supported by gender segregation in workplaces that encourage biological gendered stereotypes.

One of the leaders' responses in this case mainly confirms this stereotype instead of breaking it. In her discussion of female leadership, Head of Department 025 explained the gendered stereotype of female leaders as being inconsiderate:

We have this stereotype that women are strict and not considerate. To be honest I fell into this trap many times because we reassert this stereotype in any individual situation. In the workplace, I justify it as women understand women's strength. That's why they aren't considerate because they know that females can handle many difficult situations. [L025, Head of Department]

The explanation of the Head of Department (025) confirmed her approach in dealing with female employees' situations and circumstances. While subordinates perceived it as inconsiderate behaviour, she viewed it and justified it as awareness of women's strength. Dealing with situations in the workplace based on the belief that women are strong and should be tough enough to overcome any circumstances is clearly unhelpful. In fact, these pre-existing beliefs on being forceful and strong reflect superiority. For example, one of the respondents characterised female leadership as follows:

...women are logical, detailed and organised, that's why they might be perceived as strict because we want our work to be perfect. We can't do something superficially. [L022, Dean of College]

Another gendered belief about female leaders was expressed by Participant 022. She justified inconsideration as being perfectionist and logical. Working to be perfect is a form of competitiveness which constructs masculine behaviours, such as being controlling and strict. Leaders such as Dean 022 describe her perfectionist nature as a female feature which might

encourage leaders to be well organised, but at the same time it might be a defence for personal inflexibility regardless of gender aspects. The tendency to generalise perfectionism as a female attitude of leadership reproduces gender dichotomy and creates a sense of superiority.

While some gendered stereotypes are expressed positively, especially by leaders who perceived female leadership behaviour constructively, a number of negative stereotypes of female subordinates appeared in the interviews. For example, the Head of Unit 023 argued that being a leader to female subordinates is challenging:

The problem of leading female employees is that they take everything personally. They are too emotional and sensitive. Every semester I try to change the schedule of faculty members in order to be fair in organising their workdays and breaks programme. Many of them complain if the schedule does not fit with their own timetable and feel offended. [L023, Head of Unit]

The Head of the Unit 023 here alienated herself as a woman by ‘othering’ female lecturers and endorsing gender stereotypes against women. Clichés associated with being female, for example that they exaggerate emotions or are ‘drama queens’ reiterate internalised sexism against women. Participant 023 formed a negative view of female subordinates which allowed her to demonstrate more masculine leadership qualities. Opposing and distancing herself from female subordinates reveals a cultural disgrace construction being placed on being a woman.

Further gendered stereotypes appeared in the data where participants explained reasons of destructive leadership behaviour. From Participant 012’s view, women’s jealousy is a key reason for many conflicts and leaders’ misbehaviours:

Female’s jealousy causes many conflicts in this university. It’s difficult to create a work team or creative work environment. Bad behaviours occurred because of competitiveness between women. [Lecturer, 012]

Workplace rivalry and envy are culturally associated with women and developed in a masculine environment which provokes incompatible relationships and gender bias. While competitive behaviour is mostly associated with men, the patriarchal societal system often

reinforces women's jealousy beliefs at this local level. Manifestations of female negative stereotypes are culturally and traditionally constructed and reproduced in this context as a result of some subordinates' resentment of masculine behaviour which causes internalised oppression.

In the interviews, some participants emphasised the fact that female leadership behaviour is culturally and socially constructed. Participants 005 and 014 voiced their views about the influence of cultural constraints on shaping female leaders' behaviours:

Women in Saudi are controlled by their culture and how community perceives them. When they acquire a leadership position, it is very important for them to create a support system. They are afraid of penalties or being judged by others. Men are more courageous and able to be objective and declare what is right or wrong because they are raised to be natural and free from judgement [Lecturer, 005]

Culturally, female leaders can be afraid of accountability. They have been raised to be careful in each step of their life. This influences female ethical leadership negatively because they lead by the book [Lecturer, 014]

The respondents expressed their views on the effect of a patriarchal culture, subcultures and family identities on female leadership conduct. Avoiding blame, cultural judgments and being afraid of accountability are some of the results of cultural discouragement of female ethical courageous behaviour. According to these participants, culture affects the presence of honest and fair female leadership. While these behaviours explain the cultural construction of female leaders' conduct, such views still imply bias and male preference as they tend to confirm Saudi female helplessness and victimisation.

4.3 Summary

The chapter presented the initial findings and main themes to emerge from the data collected during the interviews, observations and analysis of field notes. The themes in the findings are divided according to the research objectives. The first theme clarified findings that address the individualistic notions of leadership that are evident and how participants conceptualised ethical leadership from a leader-centred view. This theme revealed participants' interpretations and meaning making of individualistic understandings to ethical

leader traits and behaviours. Based on the collected data, there are three main sub-themes to the participants' individualistic interpretations of ethical leadership. The first subtheme concerns the role model perception and frequent description of ethical leadership. A number of leaders explained the importance of being seen to be an ethical role model and creating an ethical environment in the university, and the positive impact of this on employees' ethical behaviour. Such views seem to reflect a conventional understanding of ethical leadership, ignoring the complexity of organisational behaviour and power relationships toward faculty members. Several lecturers, on the other hand, shed light on leaders' self-centred and narcissistic behaviours in the university, pointing to a felt need for greater social and relational characteristics and more informed and sensitive communications with their subordinates.

The second subtheme cast the analytical net further to consider religious interpretations of ethical leadership. Several leaders mentioned the importance of Islamic religious virtues in describing their ideas about an ethical leader. These qualities seem detached from social contexts and daily work dynamics. By contrast, the responses of some lecturers reveal the need for a relational understanding of Islamic principles as a basis of ethical leadership. This finding prepared the ground for a further subtheme related to heroic definitions of the ethical leader. The data uncovered views from a number of participants who focus on the role of charisma and emotional intelligence when describing their image of an ethical leader. While some views emphasised individualistic notions of heroic characteristics, academics put a great deal of emphasis on the social aspects of an ethical leadership personality.

Moving on to the second major theme, this covered findings about institutional policies, regulations and the organisational structures that have a bearing upon the construction of ethical and counterproductive leadership practices. Within this theme, there are again three subthemes which appeared strongly within the collected data. The first subtheme exposed the clash of managerialist influences on DSU leaders and the educational values of academics. It is evident from most of the lecturers' responses that managerial power produces counterproductive and unfair practices towards faculty members. The second subtheme present data relating to the role of the university's top-down structure. A number of academics discussed their views about the bureaucratic culture and power structures that have a significant impact on leader's counterproductive behaviour, as this is reinforced by hierarchal structures. Academics' responses viewed the centralised power of DSU leadership as a problem which disregards faculty members' participation in decision making. The final

subtheme here showcased views on quality standards at DSU. Again, a majority of faculty members described the pressures of fixed quality criteria that inhibit academic autonomy and push the direction of standardised leadership practices. This had the effect of extending the perceived impact of counterproductive leadership behaviour through the results-oriented environment of work, in turn limiting academics and student's freedom and creativity.

The final theme delivered information about perceptions about the socio-cultural impact on ethical and counterproductive leadership practices. This theme also had three subthemes emerging from the findings. The first of these subthemes addressed the responses of the participants on paternalistic leadership behaviour. Several leaders linked ethical leadership directly to images of paternalistic behaviour that leaders should develop towards their subordinates. While some leaders viewed paternalistic approaches as ethical in themselves, there are several other responses which indicated its counterproductive impact on academics. Multiple views of participants highlighted unfair treatment among leaders who have a tendency to behave in parental way toward them and expect them to show respect and obedience. The following subtheme presented data on traditional norms and how interpretations here were linked to counterproductive behaviour among leaders. Again, a number of participants described the influence of traditional and tribal norms on their leaders' unfair behaviours. The data showed several patriarchal and masculine leadership tendencies within the Saudi educational work culture which perpetuate social divisions and have unfair consequences for academics. The final subtheme here disclosed internalised gender prejudices, explaining how these are intertwined among both DSU leaders and academics responses on matters of ethical leadership and followership. Based on the data, patriarchal beliefs and the continuing cultural bias against Saudi women are nurtured within the segregated university culture and reproduced in its masculine leadership practices and beliefs. The segregated patriarchal environment construct and solidifies the counterproductive masculine leadership practices identified here, working against female subordinates and reproducing gender prejudice among and also against female leaders.

One of the major findings from this research concerned participants' perceptions of the religious interpretation of what being ethical entails. Some leaders at interview appeared to focus on their moral identity and their strong awareness and connection to *Allah* (God). Other participants mentioned central Islamic ethical features such as *Ihsan* (goodness, kindness), *Rahma* (mercy) and *Adl* (justice) which focus on the social and relational responsibility of leaders.

Another key finding is that the national and traditional norms and notions that impact upon leaders' behaviours are rooted within tribal and patriarchal cultures. Behaviours such as favouritism towards family relatives and work colleagues were considered by most of the other participants as examples of unfair treatment, while leaders might rationalize their 'loyal' behaviour because they reproduce *Sumāa*: a family legacy. However, those articulating such a view tended to unconsciously adopt male paternalistic behaviour to fulfil tribal expectations, in order to gain acceptance from their individual social and tribal groups.

Chapter Five

The Interrelated Dialectics of Ethical and Counterproductive Leadership Practices at Saudi DSU

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will critically discuss the findings from the research, in conjunction and contrast with the current relevant literature while applying the adopted dialectical approach to the analysis. It connects the empirical data presented in the preceding chapter with theories relating to ethical leadership and the varying typologies of counterproductive behaviour which were reviewed in the first and second chapters of this thesis. The arguments set out in this chapter emphasise the significance of generating a dialectical conceptualisation, and negotiating power asymmetries between leaders and their subordinates, as well as illuminating the multiple forms of power relations that reinforce contradictions and social tensions (Collinson, 2020). From a critical dialectical stance, leaders wield significant power, which produces different forms of behaviour and can be considered ethical as well as destructive at the same time. In addition, it is significant to highlight the power of relational followership, as this accounts for agency that extends beyond seniority and bestows credence on the oppositional tendencies that characterise leader-follower power relations. This is crucial when considering the key questions this thesis aims to address: specifically how DSU leadership constructs and reproduces notions of ethical, empowering and constructive behaviour among female leaders that can variously be perceived as oppressive and counterproductive by faculty members.

Furthermore, the chapter will analyse the findings and the emergent themes proceeding from the DSU participants' interviews, the participant observations, and field notes that were presented in the previous chapter. The three main themes selected there - individualistic, organisational and socio-cultural - are interconnected, as mentioned previously, and indicate multiple blurred dialectics. The way in which the discussion will be divided is based on extending these three key themes, relating them directly to the research objectives based on the case study at DSU. The first theme explores the role of power in constructing individualistic perspectives and opinions about ethical leadership that reproduce counterproductive behaviours. This theme is further divided into subthemes: role modelling, spirituality-religion and heroic leaders, and explores the way power constructs enable female DSU leaders to reproduce leader-centred forms of thinking, relating this in turn to the contradictory reactions of female academics. The particular focus here is on how leadership

patterns perpetuate masculine ethics based on the wider socio-cultural concern to develop 'the great man' understandings, and practices that reinforce individuality rather than female cooperation when targeting the establishment of greater equality and social justice. The second theme focuses on institutionalised power, and its consequence as a tool that shapes leadership practices. This theme underlines the role of power in creating fixed top-down norms, policies, and performance guidelines for employees according to three dimensions: managerialism, bureaucratic and hierarchical structures, and additional imported quality criteria. The final theme of this chapter explores the significance of the deeply engrained patriarchal and socio-cultural aspects of leadership that are widely perpetuated in Saudi Arabia; namely, paternalism, cultural and social values, and persistent norms as well as the participants' experiences of gender segregation.

The discussion that follows has been organised to reinforce and amplify the key themes and subthemes from the findings presented in the previous chapter. The purpose is to underline the importance of contextualization and to connect the findings more easily and effectively to the research objectives and anticipated contribution set out through the initial chapters of the thesis. The outcome should be a more cohesive and consistent appraisal of the available data, the analysis presented, and conclusions drawn.

5.2. Theme One: The ethical leader myth and its contradictory outcomes

It seems sensible to begin by discussing the participants' responses with regard to their understanding of the meaning of ethical leadership, and how it informs their personal relationships with leaders. Interestingly, the opinions given were very similar to the images presented in the orthodox leadership literature. A number of the participants' perceptions were very traditional, with the majority communicating a conventional and hypothetical individualistic understanding of ethical leadership. When comparing their theoretical explanations with their expressed views about how they experienced ethical leadership in practice, tensions, constraints and contradictions emerged. To demonstrate this, and to reflect on the significance of these discrepancies to generate wider debate and relevant theoretical data, this theme will be developed across three sub-sections that deal with role modelling, spiritual leadership and heroic leader leadership.

5.2.1 Role modelling

The idea of being a role model appears to be closely associated in the data with ethical leadership, and was presented as something of a default definition by some respondents. The Arabic terminology for leadership, *Qiadah*, was interpreted as *Qudwah*, which refers to an

ideal or a model to be followed. Several participants linked leadership to role modelling and discussed notions explaining how *Qiadah* could be generated from *Qudwah*. The available literature on ethical leadership, which is constructed on the basis of essentialist conceptualisations (Brown and Trevino, 2006), largely stems from social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). In this, leaders are considered to be role models, responsible for demonstrating ‘appropriate’ behaviour for followers to learn from and emulate; that is they exemplify the practices preferred by the institutions for which they work. Whereas the first chapter of this thesis highlighted criticisms within mainstream regarding ethical leadership (Brown and Trevino, 2006), this chapter will discuss the complexity of role modelling dialectics to clarify the expectations and consequences of the ethics and leadership behaviour nexus more thoroughly.

Several studies assert that role modelling is among the core functions of ethical leaders (Brown and Treviño, 2006; Brown, Treviño and Harrison, 2005; Treviño, Hartman and Brown, 2000). Such leaders ostensibly enforce and shape the ethical environment by framing rules and procedures designed to have a positive and straightforward influence on their followers. This then allows them to reproduce ethical behaviours relatively easily and effectively throughout their organisations (Mayer et al., 2010). To date, these mainstream studies appear to have relied on depicting examples of individual leaders who have the ‘right’ character and personal motivations to behave ethically. Thus, the understanding of ethical leadership that emerged in the data means that some responses expressed key views detailing to leaders that role modelling is essential to ensure ethical leadership.

From several of the participants’ points of view, ethical leadership is associated with leaders’ role modelling, as leaders are obliged to lead by example and always exhibit ‘right and proper’ behaviour. Undoubtedly, role modelling understood in this sense can appear to be egocentric, as it reflects an overconfidence in the appropriacy of equating of a leader’s behaviour with ethical conduct. Perceptions of leaders who view ethical leadership from an egocentric and role modelling point of view, reflect a confidence in what is right or wrong, based on how they personally view it, with the expectation that how their employees perceive ethics should necessarily be influenced by them. This simplifies the notion of being ‘the influencer’, and implies that employees should ‘learn’ ethical standards through teaching their leaders. These ‘influencers,’ or what the literature presents as principled leaders, who employ appropriate conduct, use rewards and punishment to reinforce their views about ethical behaviour among others (Trevino et al., 2003).

However, essentially, the way leaders seek to exert influence and change others' behaviours to achieve certain goals was also perceived as toxic rather than ethical, adding weight to critical reactions in the literature that challenge narrow prescriptive views about the nature of ethics. According to Lipman-Blumen (2005), leaders are considered toxic when they use influencing tactics that damage their followers, even when they are confident that they are behaving appropriately or doing good things. Such leaders can then be regarded as toxic by some, and as heroes by others, depending upon the viewers' standpoint and assumptions (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). This in turn emphasises the locus of power in leaders' role modelling, and its contradictory effect on leader-follower relations. A number of the academic participants explained the necessity to have ethical leadership, but did so in ways that revealed the ways in which leaders values dominate and reflect a desire for power. Asking the academic respondents for their opinions regarding ethical leadership revealed different perspectives on power and leader-follower relationships, which exposed role modelling as a problematic leadership approach.

A majority of academics appeared to be highly critical of their leaders' practices, offering examples of how power plays a significant role in fuelling egotistical behaviours. As mainstream theories of leadership continually create distinctions between either binary good or bad leaders, many studies fail to reflect how different analytical points are simultaneously interwoven into specific leadership practices (Collinson, 2019). This research supports the critical view that there is no such thing as a purely ethical or toxic leader when one chooses to investigate leadership practices from an individualistic level. There are individuals who hold power in a way that privilege one side (ethical role model) and conceal the other side (narcissistic behaviour) simultaneously.

By identifying the paradoxical nature of leadership behaviour, the collected data recognises the way power is both rationalised among leaders and resisted by others, especially their subordinates, at one time. Based on the responses of leaders who are characterised as ethical leaders, according to the descriptors for role modelling detailed in the previous chapter, certain patterns reveal a sense of overconfidence when guaranteeing the participants' own ethical conduct and uncertainty about their subordinates' morals and values. For example, one of the leaders declared that her subordinates 'follow' the institution's ethical guidelines as demonstrated in her own behaviour, stating that in this way she serves as their role model. The indicator of this leaders' egoistic and narcissistic nature appears in the way she aligned

leadership with her own individualistic viewpoint, assuming that leaders always do right. In complex social dynamics, however, it can be problematic to insist upon the accuracy and consistency of a leader's own behaviour or the extent to which it provokes a reaction in employees. This means that for leaders, believing themselves to be role models for others might work in certain situations with particular people and be perceived as ethical. However, it could be destructive in others and thus then perceived as counterproductive. According to Stein (2013:83), "the possibility that constructive and reactive narcissism may inhere in one leader but manifest on different occasions and may emerge in response to different circumstances".

When reviewing the research data, it is apparent that the responses varies between those leaders who associate ethical leadership with role modelling, and several academics who clearly perceived a tendency among DSU leaders to be egocentric and focused on serving their own personal interests. Both the complexity of perceiving the ethical impact of role modelling, and the counterproductive consequences of role modelling on employees, are influenced by the unpredictable nature of the socially constructed power relations that exist between leaders and followers. Current literature investigating ethical leadership focuses on the way in which 'ethical' role model leaders provide their subordinates with a sense of meaningfulness (Brown et al., 2005) and pursue this approach to improve the psychological empowerment of their followers (Dust, Resick, & Mawritz, 2014; Suifan, Diab, Alhyari & Sweis, 2020). However, these studies would have been more valuable if they had questioned the phases of role modelling and its impact on ethical as well as counterproductive behaviour among the leaders themselves. In addition, existing research on counterproductive work behaviour is broadly limited to intentionally damaging behaviour (Spector and Fox, 2002; Dalal, 2005), and primarily focuses on employees' rather than leaders' conduct. To date, it has not been possible to draw a complete picture of the extent of the harm caused by egocentric role modelling and the possible unethical consequences of this for subordinates. Nonetheless, the data in this thesis does deliver a broader understanding of ethical role modelling that extends beyond notions of 'leaders' capacity and influence' to appreciate the effect of socially constructed oppositional power relations and leadership dynamics.

5.2.2 The spiritual leader

According to the participants, various conceptions of Ethical leadership exist, and appear to be intertwined with individuals' spirituality and religious views. As Tourish et al. (2010:211) claim, "spirituality and religion are inseparable constructs", and thus inform an individual's

approach to and understanding of leadership. There are examples of efforts to link spirituality with ethics to explain leadership in the data, especially in the responses from several of the leaders and followers from the DSU. Leaders tended to consider the role of spirituality in their lives from an individualistic point of view. This means that they suggest ethical behaviour proceeds from the capacity of individuals to be aware of Allah, God. This tendency presents leaders as moral agents, capable of determining appropriate ethical standards for their employees to follow: “Such perspectives confer considerable additional power on managers, whom it is assumed can and should encourage employees to redefine their views of God and religion in terms determined by leaders” (Tourish et al., 2010:212).

Similar to the philosophical conceptualisation of ethical leadership, which typically emphasises the individuals’ capacity to be an ethical and effective leader, according to Ciulla (2005), leaders need to be aware of their ethical intentions, how they enact processes, and the resultant outcomes on others. However, moral notions of leadership are difficult to formalise and define, as they are typically constructed to fit each unique social context. In the Saudi context, the participants referred to how morality and ethics could be interpreted in line with religious teachings where mistakes are paid for by receiving *Allah*’s punishment. Leaders who connected ethical leadership to their own religious and moral identity seemed to overlook the complexity of socially constructed and relational power dynamics. Prescriptive and mainstream studies relating to ethical leadership and the moral identity of leaders (Aquino and Reed, 2002; Mayer et al., 2012) demonstrate that leaders with a strong moral identity behave ethically, and that this impacts positively on their subordinates as they adhere to their morals. The tendency of orthodox research on ethical leadership to focus on moral leaders is based on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1991; Mayer et al., 2012), and is limited to leaders’ individualistic morality only. It makes no attempt to differentiate between one’s ethical, social and relational behaviour, and one’s normative beliefs based on a particular religious or spiritual identity.

The notion that it is essential to pursue idealised standards as leaders, arises from the intersection of leadership and religious teaching. While many leaders viewed ethical and spiritual enlightenment as within the purview of the individual, they neglected basic Islamic principles relating to the requirement for reciprocal relationships to facilitate ethical leadership. Ali (2002) explains that followers’ acceptance is the governing principle of the Islamic attribution of leadership. While main spiritual qualities, such as *ihsan* (goodness, kindness), *rahmah* (compassion) and *Adl* (justice) in Islam (Ali, 2002) implies the ‘shared’

construction of ethical leadership between leader and follower, many leaders choose to share their spiritual responsibilities between them – as individuals - and *Allah* (God). This was highlighted in some participants' views as they explained that ethical leaders are aware of Allah's punishment, and therefore their own spiritual responsibility. Yet theologically, leadership responsibility is 'contingent upon the approval of the community' (Ali, 2011:90). This then requires reciprocity and a relational understanding of what leadership involves and demands from individual leaders culturally. In contexts where leaders are perceived to behave in unjust ways, 'followers would desert the leader' (ibid). The responses of all the female academic participants suggest that leaders would be well advised to focus on the humanistic aspects of Islamic teaching, such as *rahma* – compassion - and their relationship with their followers, not their own individual spiritual beliefs. They observe that, "In the Qur'an, *rahmah* appears over 500 times and refers to the compassionate love God shows to humanity, and to all creatures, and the compassionate love of human for human" (Egel and Fry, 2016).

Spirituality and the religious subjective attributions of ethical leadership appear to be focused on leaders' actions, rather than on followers' reactions. Similar to the philosophical approach taken when conceptualising ethical leadership, Ciulla (2011) argues that leaders' actions typically have a greater impact and therefore 'their moral failures and triumphs carry greater weight and volume than those of non-leaders' (p:23). However, failing or succeeding at achieving morality in leadership practices is complex, requiring investigation that extends beyond what leaders are able to share themselves. As the data shows, leader's responses seem to perceive religious morality as proceeding from an individual awareness of *Allah's* – God's - presence. Their followers by contrast appear to appreciate the role of power, as they reflect on leadership behaviour (in practice). The majority of lecturers refer to the word *humanity* when they describe morality and religion in leadership. Humanity reflects the social ethic and relational leadership practices that take place in a collective and Islamic context; that is, 'Islamic ethical philosophy is a concern for leader-follower exchange' (Metcalf and Mutlaq, 2011). Ethical leadership, therefore, does not necessitate an understanding of whether leaders exclusively exhibit morality, as that recreates either a good or bad leader dichotomy. Rather, spiritual and ethical behaviour is largely reproduced within the context of daily leadership dynamics.

The data collected for this study affirms that the perceptions of religious ethics, morality and leadership can be taken subjectively and from different angles. However, those leaders who

mentioned the importance of their religious nature to establish an ethical basis to their leadership principally focused on identifying their personal religious values, such as *Ikhlas* (sincerity) in their work to produce high quality results, regardless of the consequences of their professional conduct on others. Some leaders spiritually rationalised their own behaviour as ethical by prioritising goals-based actions and embracing their achievements. Meanwhile their ethical virtues might be beneficial to their task engagement and ultimate goals, as how this is interpreted in leaders' relational behaviour can be seen as counterproductive, as is exemplified by the responses of the academic respondents. In terms of social reality, the behaviour of leaders cannot be assessed without a thorough understanding of the collective interdependency of the organisational and social power relations.

5.2.3 The heroic leader

A component of the individual-centred perceptions of participants' relied on the seemingly heroic traits of senior ethical people. Certainly, some of the leaders' responses in this case emphasised personal traits, such as being passionate and committed. However, academics seemed to be more focused on interpersonal and communication skills. As discussed earlier in relation to this theme, the participants' views on the meaning of ethical leadership reflected a clear convention of leadership heroism. The abstract phenomenon of 'leadership' (Barker et al., 2001) reinforces the focus on individuals' traits and actions. Due to western individualistic-dominated conceptualisations of leadership, the majority of the participants at the beginning of the interviews described leaders without referring to the notion of ethical leadership. This shows a shift between theorising abstract meanings and authentic leadership practices, especially when asked about the context they are working in. Mainstream research on ethical leadership establishes that there are various levels of detachment from cultural context, as well as a focus on generalised psychological characteristics (Knights and O'Leary, 2006; Liu, 2017). To develop an adequate understanding of how these traits, that are assumed to generate ethical behaviour and simplify the understanding of leadership dynamics, requires a more in depth view of the role of power, and the recreation of heroic fantasies of leadership.

Based on the responses of those participants in leadership positions, leaders tended to consider their own unique traits and skills as determining the extent to which they are deserving and 'ethical' leaders. As highlighted in the first chapter of this thesis, leaders who display a passionate desire for success could exhibit counterproductive behaviours due to an

inflated sense of their personal abilities, or a lack of personal insight that makes them blind to potential abusive leadership tendencies. Further, Tepper (2000) explained that abusive leaders sometimes mistreat their employees to achieve organisational and personal objectives, without a deliberate intent to cause harm. However, their perfectionist inner drive to succeed and pursue excellence can lead them to achieve results that at the same time negatively impact their social dynamics with others, as they strive to attain high performance standards. In their study, Guo and colleagues (2020) claimed that perfectionism frequently leads to abusive forms of supervision. The feeling of uncertainty and limited control over results can lead perfectionist leaders to manipulate and abuse their followers to retain a sense of control (Huang, Johnson, Hu, & Ju, 2018; Guo et al., 2020). However, their research does not address the ways in which these perfectionist and passionate characters tend to justify their behaviours as ethical. This in turn reflects how leaders tend to set ethical standards for their subordinates based on their own personal visions and objectives. From their point of view, being passionate about achieving work outcomes would then fuel their personal achievements, with the result that their subordinates could be overlooked and perceive their behaviour as counterproductive and abusive.

Having a desire for change could be a concern if it were only allied with leaders' individual capability and vision of success. Self-aggrandisement, according to Ashforth (1994), is a chief factor informing petty tyranny behaviours. It neglects the role of the follower in the leadership process. Several leaders in the case of the DSU explained the importance of charisma, as well as social intelligence. Such traits and skills were assumed to assist these leaders to be influencers or to gain followers' obedience and loyalty. These individualistic notions are influenced by western industrialised ideologies detailing processes of self-transformation, and so raise questions about the significance of importing these leadership concepts into the middle east, and in particular, how easily these align with the cultural considerations discussed in the previous section. While some of the participants asserted the importance of leaders' interpersonal skills in reference to understanding followers, the majority of the lecturers focused on the unethical consequences of poor leadership practices. Differing from a leader-centred view, academics seemed to be more likely to consider social coherence in the context of ethical leadership.

5.2.4 Recreating the 'great man' through female leader agency at DSU

As discussed above, role modelling, spiritual and heroic leadership are co-interpreted to create ethical leader understandings of participants. However, the masculine construction of

leadership remains the privileged focus of individual leaders at DSU, in a manner that corresponds clearly with the critical literature on this subject (Liu, 2017; Collinson, 2014; Kerfoot and Knights, 1993). This is entangled with the view of ‘competitive masculinity’, which encourages self-centred and materialistic forms of success (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993). There was evidence supporting these notions in the data collected at DSU, with the participants’ views indicating that heroic descriptions of ethical leaders are generally reinforced by hegemonic masculine assumptions that recreate ‘great man’ ideologies. Meanwhile several studies discuss conceptualisations of masculinity and ethical leadership (Knights and O’Leary, 2006; Liu, 2017). Those to date have not been conducted in a segregated context, which makes this case highly significant, and the researcher is therefore unable to explore dilemmas affecting ‘ethical’ masculinity and the counterproductive results of this for women in a distinctive culture such as Saudi Arabia.

A dialectical understanding is supported by, and evident in, the leadership (individualistic) practices that influence the behaviour of women in DSU, where notions of female empowerment and marginalisation co-exist simultaneously. It might be anticipated that working a DSU and being led by women would afford Saudi females significant autonomy, empowering them to believe that they can achieve equality relatively more so than women working in other Saudi universities (specifically those that remain male-dominated). In patriarchal Saudi HEIs culture, leadership roles are masculine in nature, resulting in female leaders reproducing forms of power designed to attain status and imitating hierarchical power relations that work against their female subordinates. This phenomenon was observed by Priola (2007:85) “Women managers in organisations face issues characterised by the need to shape women’s positions in roles traditionally occupied by men”.

The ‘men versus women’ binary perpetuates perceived understanding of leadership behaviours in categorical representations in forms such as the phrase ‘act like a man’, which urges many female leaders to adopt masculine leadership styles. For example, ‘The leaders we read about, the leadership activity we read about, and the theory we read about, are forms and relations of, “idealised masculinity even when the pronoun is she”’ (Oseen, 1997:170). While the leaders at the target university highlight how powerful female unity is, many also adopt masculine and hierarchal leadership approaches that reproduce historical social divisions along hierarchical lines. Their female subordinates experience much of the social harm resulting from the behaviour of people in power, who assume for their part that their personal successes are in broad terms ‘women’s achievements’. Engaging female academic

voices in this case clarified the existing counterproductive dialogue of ‘unity and justice’ that reflects a conflict between them and their leaders in the way they view leadership equality and ethics with regard to their experiences.

The current thesis recognises the ethical and counterproductive dialectic of leadership behaviour, as embodied by gendered power, which idealises heroic and charismatic leaders’ notions. The data collected for this study reveals complex, paradoxical and oppositional perceptions that serve to explain the motivations, behaviours and actions of ethical and unethical leaders, their traits and behaviours. Role modelling, and spiritual and charismatic patterns of ethical leadership appeared to be saturated by patriarchal assumptions based on leadership as a manifestation of masculinity. Thus, many of DSU’s female leaders are misidentified in their leadership roles according to masculine hegemonic criteria, and they adopt individualistic and superior conventions of ethical traits and behaviours that reproduce the division between themselves and their female followers. They tend to pursue fixed leadership values and perceive themselves as strong role models relative to others, without considering the role of power or the tendency to act as privileged relative to other faculty members who are marginalised. Being a ‘successful’ female leader at DSU reflects masculine ethics and values, such as the requirement to offer a rigorous ethical example to subordinates by putting work first. In ‘masculinity contest cultures’, there is a tendency to value typically male norms by prioritising aggression and dominance and evading apparent weaknesses and vulnerabilities (Collinson, 2020:8). The participants, especially academics, offered examples of unethical traits and patterns exhibited by some of DSU’s leaders that reflect self-centred, abusive and inconsiderate behaviours. This reveals how the effects of wielding leadership status as an instrument of power is likely to have a positive impact for leaders themselves, while simultaneously generating counterproductive consequences for their social and ethical relationships with their subordinates.

5.3 Theme Two: The impact of institutionalised ethical leadership on co-constructing leaders’ counterproductive work behaviour

The role of the organisation in defining ethical leadership is one of the more significant themes to emerge from the findings. Understandings of ethics and leaders’ behaviours are predominantly associated with bureaucratic managerial power, which is administered in accordance with hierarchal divisions and organisational norms and politics. Leaders use their authority to exercise power and influence their subordinates to achieve organisational goals. However, there are ethical tensions present concerning

precisely how leaders ‘use’ their power to accomplish administrative objectives, and determining when they are engaging in ‘abuses’ of power when managing employees. Founded on the supposedly rational structures and procedures designed by the organisation’s elite, leaders’ understanding of ethical leadership mostly aligns with organisational principles. This can generate conflicts in their relationships with subordinates, and lead to disengagement from social values, and a neglect for equal treatment and fairness.

Based on evidence provided from the gathered data, the role of institutional and structural power emerged as a key theme to clarify clashes arising from ethical and counterproductive leadership behaviours. To develop an institutional power analysis for the DSU, the following discussion will be divided into three sub-themes: the role of managerialism, top-down university structure, and comprehensive quality standards in HE.

5.3.1 Managerialism

Leaders are largely perceived in the DSU case to be competitive and goal-driven, with the result that their oversight of lecturers has the consequence of reducing their sense of academic freedom. The participants expressed their concerns over the intensive workload with which they are burdened, the rising number of teaching hours, managerial tasks and the pressures from performance evaluations conducted by their leaders. Managerialist or Taylorist ideologies appear to be contort notions of ethical standards and behaviour to ‘scientific management’ that meets perceived efficient operating standards (Taylor, 1911, 1934). Taylor further believes that employees require direction and control if they are to contribute effectively to achieving their employer’s desired goals (1947). He justified this argument, by asserting that followers who are ‘mentally sluggish’ require directive superiors (Taylor, 1947). Studies of educational leadership reveal issues about HE leader’s masculine nature when striving to develop strategies to meet managerial goals (Shepherd, 2017). Shepherd explains the misuse of power in the context of university managerialism, stating that it can take the form of a ‘perceived shift in authority from academics to managers and consequent weakening of the professional status of academics’ (2017, 1).

Current studies regarding ethical leadership suggest that leaders set clear performance criteria and utilise either rewards or punishment to reinforce ethics in the workplace

(Treviño et al., 2003; Zhu et al., 2004). However, there is some inconsistency in this argument, which by acknowledging that performance standards are fixed and leader-based, simplifies the social dynamics of reward or punishment and ignores the human capacity of subordinates to react, conform or resist. The findings of this thesis contradict both these studies, demonstrating the complexity of ethical challenges that informs leaders' managerial tendency to monitor the work and performance of academics. While the literature affirms only the positive effect of leaders' ethical logic on employees' performance, it does not take into account of organisational and managerially negative interpretations of leaders' behaviour, or efforts to deliver measurable outputs that align the destructive consequences of their relational behaviour with followers.

The majority of the faculty members participants considered the managerialist turn in the university's leadership practices has had a major impact on their relationships with leaders who now focus mainly on performance measures. Leaders' preoccupations with upholding the managerial ethos, with efficiency driven behaviour directed towards academics, who mainly then resist the pressure to make their work operationally oriented: "People cannot be expected to behave in the same predictable way as machine parts. People who are connected with each other in organisations do not make complicated machines" (Carlisle, 2011:285). The experiences of several of the study participants emphasise how managerialist power negatively impacts their leaders' behaviour and damages their relationships with academics. The evidence collected supports the opinion that "destructive forms of leadership behaviours are 'highly prevalent' in managerialist organisational cultures" (Aasland et al., 2009:21).

The findings presented in this study reveal that a number of the academics found the increased pressure in their work place negatively impacted their wellbeing, healthy relationships within the university and their turnover intention. Leaders keep regulating and monitoring academics' work, and if any faculty member does not meet their work standards or behave accordingly this is then viewed as counterproductive work behaviour. Indeed, "there is little difference in principle between managerial and employee misbehaviour except that managers decide what is misbehaviour and what is not" (Collinson and Ackroyd, 2005:306). These leaders adhere to bureaucratic and managerial ethics that are assumed to guide their ethical conduct, and then then review them through performance assessments. However, many leaders with a managerial mindset overlook the (un)ethical consequences of their own relational behaviour

towards employees, instead focusing on the attendant personal and organisational advantages. “Managers are the main supporters – and beneficiaries – of managerialism since it increases their social status and strengthens their organisational position” (Shepherd, 2017:671).

Managerialism and the ethical clash between leaders and subordinates needs to be fully explained in the current literature on ethical leadership, instead of relying too heavily on quantitative analysis. From the perspective of the majority of the study participants, the managerial behaviours of leaders are socially constructed in multiple forms, and have unintended paradoxical consequences. Acknowledging leaders’ power to act in accordance with organisational ethics and standards can lead to contradictory outcomes when enacting their own behaviour. Leader-led and managerial behaviour could ultimately reinforce abusive relationships with subordinates as they strive to achieve targets; certainly, “abusive supervision is likely to make subordinates comply with orders and rules, and strive for high performance, all of which would enhance the leader’s sense of control” (Guo et al., 2020:88). There is a necessity to attain greater understanding on ethical/counterproductive leadership and managerial power, especially in higher education institutions, as a way to explore leaders’ and academics’ complex social and power relation dynamics.

5.3.2 Top-down university structure

The majority of the respondents revealed the imbalanced relationships between leaders and academics, revealing these to have been perpetuated through the hierarchal structures present in the university. The organisations’ structure creates social relationships between managers and employees in the form hierarchical relations (Spierenburg, 2004). In their research Diefenbach and Sillince (2012:384) referred to these hierarchical relations as ‘boundaries’, protecting superiors’ social role and outlining what is ‘allowed’ or ‘appropriate’. In fact, these top-down relations comprise “social and cultural barriers between dominant elites and subordinates” (Scott, 1990:132). A top-down structure reflects a high power distance and the existence of a hierarchal process of decision making that relies minimally on employees’ participation. The position of leaders at the head of the hierarchal structure generates a notable level of responsibility with regard to achieving the specified and required output within the organisational structure. To meet their hierarchal role obligation in the

university, many leaders tend to have formal and limited communication with their subordinates.

The findings of this research reinforce this, revealing a centralised approach in the pyramidal university structure that supports leaders in making decisions independently of their faculty members. In this way, leaders can focus on the university's requirements, rules, and regulations, avoiding communication and any further justifications with their immediate subordinates. The hierarchic structure shapes leaders' behaviour, with its strong emphasis on written guidelines and fixed procedures (Schramm-Neilsen, 2000). Several of the participants suggested that leaders appear to normalise power distance by not being communicative or failing to offer justifications for updated regulations and decisions made at the higher echelons of leadership. These behaviours exhibited by leaders reflect relatively less emphasis on collaboration with academics and relational group work.

According to the data from the participant observations, meetings and interview responses, the academics in a certain department met only with the Head of that Department and never with the Dean, Directors or higher level senior managers. Leader's interactions with academics primarily rely on a centralised process and the top-down flow of rules. These top-down regulations supposedly reinforce ethical rationality, and values for leaders, to allow them to establish their positional power within the structure of the university. However the reactions of the academics are less than positive on this issue. The behaviours of the leaders in the university are perceived of as being induced by bureaucratic authority and formality, which influence their decision making processes, creating palpable tension in what they view as applicable rules and what academic experience requires. A number of the lecturers at DSU appear to view the bureaucratically driven behaviour of leaders as counterproductive, because it implies forced obedience to rules and inflexible regulations.

5.3.3 Quality assurance and effective leadership demands

The findings reveal that the tensions associated with quality assurance outcomes were a common component informing the participants' views with regard to the nature of ethical leadership. Higher education institutions in several countries are progressively experiencing significant changes in how they are organising and managing academic standards (Hamlin and Patel, 2017). Issues such as globalisation and privatisation are

pushing public administrators towards quality global standards and corporate commercialisation, as a means to adopt a business model for leadership in public sector institutions such as HEIs (Knight and Clarke, 2018; Jurkiewicz, 2013; Farazmand, 2012). This echoes findings reported elsewhere with regard to HEIs; for example Clarke and Knight (2015:186) observe, “like much of the public sector, academic institutions have become dominated by a neo-liberal culture where there is an unadulterated faith in deregulated market competition that is perceived as a solution to all economic if not social ills”.

Highlighting issues linked to the domination of quality criteria, the faculty members consulted illuminated the challenges they encounter when responding to leadership pressures, and adjusting standards relative to their academic activity. Leadership in these public organisations consequently conveys a clash of values and interests, which combine the running of public institutions administrations with excellence, efficiency and effectiveness goals (Farazmand, 2017). This preoccupation with linking efficiency and leadership effectiveness tends to emphasise high productivity and creates a demand to meet greater performance requirements especially among academics. Tensions and conflicts of interests between management and academics, due to quality objectives and a productivity orientation bring to the fore issues associated with ethics in leadership as a major concern. While universities leadership prioritise high performance and productivity as a means to attain organisational efficiency and quality assurance values, they also potentially violate values of equity, fairness and equal treatment.

Quality assurance refers to “the quality of inputs, outputs and processes, which have to be combined with the demands put forward by students, universities and society each time one intends to assess quality” (Sarrico et al., 2010:40). The Saudi government established a National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) to develop higher education quality in Saudi Arabia (Alshayea, 2012). Cardoso et al. (2018:252) studied or described quality assurance demands as added bureaucracy, noting that they function by “inducing the increased monitoring of academic performance, formalisation of procedures and time availability for non-academic tasks”.

While leadership effectiveness and quality standards rely on academics’ productivity, the relevant power relations need to be further explored. Many participants in this case

disagree with leadership practices as they impact on fixed quality efforts. Tension in the relationships between leaders and academics are highly affected by quality and ethics as clashes of values. Quality preoccupation could result in leaders neglecting their support role within the social system, leading them to become goal oriented. Organisational values that are embodied in internalised codes of ethics might also influence leaders' ethical behaviour. This view is premised on a model of organisational competitiveness rather than one that emphasises human wellbeing and personal advancement (Metcalf, 2010). According to Cardoso and colleagues (2015:952), there are several reasons why academics typically resist quality criteria:

[A]cademics' perceptions that quality assurance: is an imposition and prescription; has a highly bureaucratic character; is not aligned with the 'academic endeavour'; has unintended consequences on personal and organisational behaviour; promotes inspection, regulation and standardisation; relates more to monitoring and control and less to enhancement and transformation; grasps the 'academic world' through the language and ideology of managerialism; and is based on procedures that are not entirely reliable and capable of addressing the 'essence' of the educational process, inducing improvements.

In the case of DSU, the participants opine that quality standards result in control-oriented and performance focused leadership practices. According to the respondents, several of the leaders are primarily focused on the beneficial side of various quality accomplishments (achieving objectives) and consequently neglect the dark side, which is related to an absence of collaboration and commitment to the ethics of care. Many academics suggest that the excellence driven, and standardisation efforts that comprise leadership behaviours create clear dissent relative to quality logic. This then reflects their request for more humanistic quality criteria, which in turn creates social change and ensures cooperation between lecturers and students and the university's leadership.

5.3.4 The role of institutionalised gendered power on co-constructing hierarchal and managerial ethical leadership at DSU

The previous sub-themes (managerialism, top-down structure and quality standards) explored the role of organisational politics in formulating Women University's leadership practices. Managerial practices appear in the data as they are ethically taken for granted behaviours, which reinforce hierarchical social relations between female

leaders and female subordinates. There are obvious managerial-oriented behaviours here that cause relational detachment between leaders and faculty members, consequently resulting in a clash of values.

The role of management in creating leaders' misbehaviour is due to the existence of established privileges (Collinson, 2000), which underpin followers' marginalisation. When female leaders at DSU adhere to managerial ethics, while also meeting the requirement to achieve set quality and effectiveness objectives, they tend to neglect their female followers' preferences. The hegemonic masculinity through institutionalised power mostly creates an environment of authoritative reasoning within which Saudi women leaders must operate to practice power and assure organisational objectives are realised. Male-dominated interpretations of Saudi HE policies, structures and aims therefore provokes masculine leadership practices even at all Women Universities. While many of female leaders assumed that they need to attain fixed standards to be deemed successful, they arguably pursue progress at the cost of other females' empowerment, emancipation and equality.

Several scholars, including Blackmore (2013), problematise HEI's leadership models as disempowering for women, and call for a greater exploration of the potential to acknowledge the unique skills of professionals of different genders in the institutional context. Supporting this view, Fitzgerald states that 'women's presence in the world of men is conditional to them being willing to modify their behaviour' (2014:6). While feminist critiques of HE leadership explore the role of managerialism and power in creating the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles (Blackmore, 2013), there are limitations in relation to the understanding of precisely how institutionalised power and managerial progress construct counterproductive leadership behaviours, particularly in a gender segregated context.

The evidence from DSU expands on the feminist critique of leadership that reproduces the gender dichotomy, as it mainly focuses on women achieving leadership positions relative to men. A dialectical lens helps to move the debate beyond male-female divisions to focus on the exercise of power as central to understanding masculinity and femininity in the leadership process. Analysing the case through this lens helps us to recognise how masculinity and managerial power leads Saudi female leaders to believe that they can achieve social justice and gender equality by meeting managerial goals and attaining quality excellence standards. In other words, being at a women only

university led by female leaders might not guarantee justice for women, reflecting on this process of leadership and how female academics are treated becomes counterproductive.

Working in a segregated university environment such as DSU, which is the first Saudi institution exclusively led by females, undoubtedly would be expected to generate space for female empowerment and opportunities for women to attain leadership positions. Evidence suggests that the managerial roots within the context of female empowerment shift social understanding of empowerment from gender equality towards more individualistic and power and obedience related notions. Female leaders were found to compare themselves to male leaders at other Saudi universities, aiming to manage the way men do. It emerged that female leaders approve a masculine leadership structure, and continuously recreate social divisions, which keeps females marginalised. Gendered power and hegemonic masculinity constantly reproduce divisions and hierarchies (Collinson, 2018; Adib et al., 2003). Values of managerial masculinity and justice mean that the value afforded to subordinates, especially females are often in conflict. Female leaders pursuing administrative values of efficiency and effectiveness to generate high productivity outcomes often violate the social values that require equal treatment and fairness for female followers.

Saudi female leaders at the university play the roles of 'insider outsider' (Fitzgerald, 2014), both of which are commonly associated with traditional hierarchical structures. While the insider is allocated a role within the framework of organisational bureaucracy and processing managerial careers, the outsider is located in the gender role determined by patriarchal culture (Fitzgerald, 2014). Being in a gender segregated culture structured by patriarchal order, where males lead and females follow, highly reinforces the masculine understanding of leadership. The structure of the university appears to be feminine in terms of gender (Women University), yet it adheres to the principles of hegemonic masculinity, as the top-down structure recreates aggressive female leadership practices according to the perceptions of the research participants.

There are contradictions present in the perceptions of female participants with regard to the limitations on empowerment at DSU expressed by female leaders. Serious doubts have been raised about whether and all female environment creates justice for women, even when there is apparent open access to leadership positions. The approach taken by incumbents and the overall culture of leadership evident in this university is closely

associated with disempowering practices that perpetuate inequality for those lower down the formal hierarchy. Distance between leaders and academics in this case is multiplied by the marginalisation of female subordinates, as practiced by female leaders. While leaders embrace their achievements as higher up the hierarchical structure, they also seem to neglect collective women's participation, which is supposed to engender harmony and balance at DSU.

5.4 Theme Three: Socio cultural co-construction of ethical/counterproductive leadership practices

The final theme discussed in this chapter concerns the role of the Saudi context and the socio-cultural interpretations that influence the reproduction of ethical and counterproductive leadership behaviours. The most up to date research on leadership, power and leader-follower relational processes calls for additional contextual positioning (Edwards and Schedlitzki, 2018). Saudi DSU is undoubtedly a unique context within which to investigate ethics and leadership and to explore female experiences. The researcher's background is also important, as Al-Sudairy (2017) claims that, "even when articles or studies are published, they tend to be written by people who lived abroad all their lives... or by westerners who are unaware of the culture and customs known to Saudis" (6). This study adds empirical depth to leadership and gender research conducted to date in Saudi Arabia, as there is dearth of studies that challenge heroic understandings of leadership and broader culturally limited views pertaining to gender roles and ethics. In this section, context and socio-cultural aspects will be discussed in relation to three subthemes: paternalistic, traditional and social norms; and gender segregation.

5.4.1 Paternalistic leadership

In the interviews, the participants provided evidence of tension and conflict regarding the existence of a paternalistic leadership framework that reflects the dialectical nature of ethical and counterproductive behaviours. While leaders might recognise that being paternalistic or serving as a father figure is essential to maintaining an ethical relationship with followers, several academics revealed how dominant and authoritative figures are concealed behind these moral protective behaviours. The value of explaining how paternalism is associated with current understanding of ethics and morality in the Saudi context reveals that there are underexplored issues and contradictory outcomes at the crux of leaders' behaviour. This means the patriarchal community typically constructs ideologies of parental control that are misinterpreted as protection and care, especially towards women. Leader-follower

relationships provide a window to explain how paternalistic behaviour has contradictory outcomes in a Saudi university. Several of the participants spoke at length about parental patterns of behaviour as exhibited by the leaders at DSU. A number of these leaders also declared the importance of their “ethical” paternalistic leadership approach, as explained in the previous chapter.

Paternalistic leaders imitate the way fathers behave in the family setting. Prescriptive studies of paternalistic leadership generally suggest managers should take on the role of father figures within organisations, cultivate a feeling of family while also wielding the authority to create a collective culture that resembles the family structure (e.g. that which was common in Victorian Britain) and often idealises values (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008). Personal care, forgiveness and consideration towards subordinates shape paternalistic behaviours that supposedly have a measurable positive effect on subordinates’ responses (Zhang et al., 2015). While research on paternalism has largely been restricted to its positive impact on leadership and leaders, especially in the context of Eastern cultural studies, it does not address the impact of ethical tensions on leadership behaviour more widely, or its potentially counterproductive impact on followers. As paternalism arises in the research findings, it would be significant to understand how it is constructed in Saudi HE leadership, and what female academics’ responses to paternalistic behaviours involve. Again, when witnessed through a dialectical lens, the perspectives and outcomes of leaders’ paternalistic behaviours seem to be somewhat paradoxical and contradictory. Taking into consideration the asymmetric nature of the distribution of power between leaders and followers, it would be significant to highlight follower agency in a manner that questions popular notions of paternalist loyalty and challenges existing assumptions regarding compliance.

During the interview discussions, the participants’ called attention to Saudi socio-cultural backgrounds associated with paternalism. In the Saudi context, power is regularly associated with paternalistic leadership, due to the historical and political construction of the father role and family loyalty. The majority of Arab families adhere to the values and rules adopted by extended families and exhibit a tribal mentality (Madsen, 2010), i.e. in this case, “Tribalism is where individuals have strong feelings of loyalty to their tribes” (Subhi et al., 2016:17). Many leaders in Saudi HE universities are expected to implement tribal understandings of leadership that reproduce paternalistic patterns of behaviour towards female followers. Thus, there is a necessity to observe the way in which paternalistic tradition and sense of protection

contributes towards the marginalisation of followers, especially women, in terms of its ethical tensions.

Tribalism and paternalism are rooted within the social structure and Saudi culture, basically following rules in accordance with male networks (Ali, 1995; Al-Dabbagh, 2015). This social structure might help to explain the nature of those relationships that inform the leadership structure in Saudi HE, as well as the emphasis on the role of the leader as father. In a segregated female university, female leaders reproduce the father role and paternalistic behaviour, as it is associated with their understanding of what leadership roles involve and demand. From these leaders' points of view, being in a leadership position requires that one extends protection to followers, even protecting them from their own weaknesses, as always father (or leader) knows best. Protection, or what is known as '*qiwama*' in Islam, is misinterpreted as a cultural practice that exclusively refers to men's protection of women (Metcalf, 2011; Alenazy, 2018). While existing studies focus on the role of men in guaranteeing the protection of women, and the impact of male dominance on experiences of Saudi leadership, they have not dealt yet with how this notion of protection informs Saudi female leadership behaviour as well. There is no obvious discussion about the extent to which *qiwama* would be acceptable as an ethical practice for female leaders, or how it might determine the character of their relationships with workplace subordinates. For example, Abalkhail (2017) explained the concept of *qiwama* was present in the Saudi organisational environment, where men are continually expected to be responsible for women. However, studies examining Saudi female leaders seem to be confined by a failure to challenge notions of leadership and gender.

The case of DCS Women's University provides us with opportunities to extend our understanding of socio-cultural Saudi leadership construction that moves beyond gender dichotomies, i.e. male vs. female, to produce a wider analysis of leadership norms and practices. This means illustrating how socially constructed masculine forms of leadership are or can be adopted by women themselves, and to what extent these could be perceived by female followers as ethical or otherwise. Viewing both female leaders and followers' points of view reveals different perspectives regarding (un)ethical paternalistic behaviours. Traditionalist leaders typically seek to avoid change and treat their subordinates based on their age groups, and accordingly play a fatherly role more unequivocally. These 'fatherly' practices construct gendered authority within the constraints of benefiting and protecting their subordinates' (Collinson et al., 1994).

The paternalistic notion of leadership, as adopted by traditionalist female leaders reproduces the patriarchal restrictions imposed on Saudi women. While these female leaders often embrace empowerment through their 'paternalistic' exercise of power, they are recognised by the respondents as behaving in a manner that reproduces inequality against female subordinates in a way that makes it a questionable form of protection. Hamdan (2005) explained how practices of gender inequalities are produced institutionally in the Saudi context:

A woman's identity first appears in relation to her father's family's identity card. Later, if she marries, she will be added to her husband's card or, in the case of her father's death, to that of her nearest male kin. In Saudi society in general, it is believed that the role of women was basic to maintaining the structure of the family and therefore of society. (45)

This is significant when explaining the role of Saudi female agency in terms of resistance, as well as when remaining true to patriarchal and paternalistic practices, as there is a need to go further. Pharaon (2004) clarified that Saudi women tend to exhibit behaviours that contradict their role and value within society:

Within the family, the father has the final say, which in theory gives him ultimate power. Nevertheless, the women's role is the key to maintaining the family. Not only does she reproduce successive generations, ensuring family continuity, size, and power, but also, she is responsible for the new generation's informal education. It is the mother who transmits the cultural and religious traditions that reinforce solidarity and loyalty to the family. It is not surprising that there has been such strong resistance, from men and women alike, to change women's roles. (358)

As such, female leaders in the university environment generally accept the need for a paternalistic leaning to their behaviour, due to its shared association with leadership in their society. However, female faculty members mainly challenge the paternalistic behaviour of leaders and perceive it as counterproductive behaviour. According to these participants' views, leaders could appear to behave in a nurturing way that facilitate their communication with subordinates. However, some academics believe that age plays a significant role for traditionalist leaders wishing to construct paternalistic behaviour and mainly expect loyalty

and trust from followers. While studies indicate that paternalistic leadership impacts positively on employees trust and ethical climate in the workplace (Okten and Cenkci, 2012; Kidwell and Martin, 2005), the present study suggests followers often perceive these behaviours as opportunistic and as such counterproductive.

5.4.2 Cultural and traditional norms and leadership behaviour

Context and its social dynamics offer an in depth understanding of perceptions about leadership and ethical standards. Several of the participants discussed culture as a key factor when striving to understand leadership in relation to expectations of ethical behaviour. While mainstream studies have explored how ‘ethical culture’ (Trevino et al., 1998) can be limited by its organisational context, social constructionist studies (Fairhurst, 2009; Carroll et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2014) explore the effects of context beyond the fixed and bounded understanding of a prescriptive organisational culture. This means that culture is simultaneously dynamic and ‘multi-layered’ (Fairhurst, 2009), therefore ethical leadership is intertwined with the sociocultural context (Shotter and Cunliffe, 2003; Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien, 2012; Liu, 2017). However, existing studies still fail to focus on how socio-cultural constructions of leadership carried out dialectically determine what can be judged as ethical, and not necessarily particularly in a gender segregated organisation.

The majority of the participants consulted, most notably the academics, highlighted examples of unethical leader behaviour in their interviews, focusing on the representation of personal relationships in the workplace. This is significant because Saudi culture is considered a collectivist culture that greatly values personal relationships (Alomari, 2015): “Being a collectivist as opposed to individualist”, according to Metcalfe and Mimouni (2011:175), “gives priority to the family and the community and less to the individual”. In Saudi workplaces, personal relationships lead to favouritism and elite privilege which is felt throughout bureaucratic structures (Metcalfe, 2008). In the Middle East, favouritism, referred to as *wasta* is perceived culturally “a source of pride and prestige” for leaders, who mainly bestow it within their tribal group (Brnett, Yandle and Naufal, 2013). However, the data revealed that leaders’ personal preferences behaviour and social connections are thought of as an example of unethical practice by many academics.

Issues of work alliances and courtesy are perceived as cultural, and require additional ethical attention from Saudi higher education institutions. Lecturers clarified that traditionalist leaders frequently engage in behaviours that imply favouritism. Those leaders not only

prioritise tribal or family connections, but sometimes also develop friendships within certain members of staff. The relationship between leaders and their work colleagues should maintain group solidarity by exchanging benefits and providing political or social support for group members. However, alliances based on favouritism can promote insularity, sectionalism and division. Several female leaders at DSU appeared to adopt and reproduce traditional Saudi men's tribal solidarity as a way to effectively dominate leadership positions. According to Abalkhail (2016: 29): "The form of patriarchy which is embedded in the system of *wasta* provides opportunities for some women while it limits the prospects of others." This statement is strongly supported by some of the key findings in this research. Many of the more traditional behaviours and cultural norms engaged in contradict the humanistic emphasis on sociability and interactive social ethics, as enacted with subordinates. Considering the experiences of the participants who are faculty members at DSU, behaviours that might have been culturally normalised as ethical for leaders personally and in groups, or tribal advantages need to be ethically and legally questioned.

5.4.3 Gender segregation and internalised prejudice

Discussions about the socio-cultural norms that are attributed to ethical leadership in the Saudi context would not be complete without an exploration of gender segregation. Gender segregation is a norm and tradition in Saudi culture, although it is not a requirement under Islam (Meijer, 2010; Alexander, 2013). According to this tradition, men and women work in separate buildings with no *ikhtilāf* permitted, i.e. no socialising between men and women, with only a minimum of meetings taking place between them. Segregation within patriarchal systems is predicated on a model male-domination and the reinforcement of discrimination against females. According to Littrel and Bertsch (2013) this can be describes as a '*patriarchal belt society*':

Societal practices institutionalise negative discrimination concerning women, often codified in laws that prohibit women from participating in much of public life or fully competing in the labour market ... The patriarchal belt is characterised by extremely restrictive codes of behaviour for women, such as the practice of rigid gender segregation and a powerful ideology linking family honour to female virtue. Men are entrusted with safeguarding family honour through their control over female members; they are backed by complex social arrangements that ensure the protection, restriction, and dependence of women. (313)

Saudi women's role in the family, workplace and society more widely is mainly associated with their gender in the patriarchal context. Yamani (2000) clarified that "although interpretations of 'correct' Islamic behaviour influence all sections of society, local customs, norms and tribal traditions actually dictate women's roles and are enforced through familial structures" (96).

As I explained in the previous chapters, the case of DSU is distinctive as it diverges from the typical Saudi organisational situation in which men lead, and women follow. Almost all other Saudi universities have two separate sections: male (responsible for leadership) and female (comprised of subordinates). However, the case of DSU is considered unique, as it is led by women, albeit women who are acutely aware of the wider societal pressures placed upon them and their colleagues. While gender dichotomy and male-dominance is apparent when there is physical segregation between men and women in an organisation, this female-only university reveals a dominance of indirect hegemonic masculinity that informs the moulding of leadership, ethics and practices. Reflecting on the research findings, societal implementation of leadership practices reproduces gender discrimination among women in the Saudi context. In Saudi society, "women have constituted a separate category, legally discriminated against and spatially segregated" (Le Renard, 2008:610).

The findings set out in this case study illustrate that gender prejudice exists in a manner that measurably influences the relationships between female academics and their female leaders, being fed by patriarchal ideologies that reinforce male superiority. In a male-dominated society and in Saudi HEIs, women seem to enforce biased beliefs that impact on other women in the workplace. These traditional stereotypes shape the expectations that women are less ethical than male leaders. Judgments expressed by females about leadership roles and what makes them ethical reproduces "internalised oppression". According to Liebow (2016:715) "If women are surrounded by people who view them as subordinate, incapable, or lacking control over their actions, women are likely to come to understand themselves in a similar way, even if subconsciously". The data from this study reveals that many lecturers believe that if their university were male led it would then be a more equitable environment; this is because of their experience with female leadership in the university. Some of the female leaders here internalise biased beliefs about what is required from them, such as the requirement to be rigid and unyielding and act according to patriarchal norms. As Liebow usefully explains: "For example, take stereotypes that support the idea that women are submissive and lack rationality. Exposure to these sorts of stereotypes can cause women to

internalise these ideas and believe them, both consciously and unconsciously” (Liebow, 2016:714).

The responses from several participants concerning the nature of female leadership focused on the tensions arising from their having been raised in a society that never expected them to become leaders, reflecting a wider social narrative that thinks of women as a single homogenous group. According to Le Renard (2008:631) “spatial segregation and various state rules concerning women have contributed to defining Saudi women as a unified category encompassing their different origins and groups of belonging”. The socially constructed dichotomy of male/female reinforces the belief that women are not better than men in terms of leadership. Patriarchal ideologies and the segregated social context results in women placing barriers in front of other women. They fear explorations of equality and justice in hierarchal organisations, preferring to maintain the social divisions that keep women confined in a segregated environment.

Similarly, the female leaders at DSU hold prejudiced beliefs about their female followers, reproducing the stereotypical notion that they are sensitive, emotional and take things personally. In contrast, some leaders spoke at the beginning of the interviews about female empowerment and leadership, appearing to articulate complaints about their female followers. These perceptions are then associated with a patriarchal construct which reproduces prejudices against women. According to Acker (2006), “systematic disparities between participants in power” (443) are constructed by *inequality regimes*, and are “defined as loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organisations” (443). Mavin (2008) clarified that ‘queen bee’ refers to a woman in a high position who has attained their professional objectives, but then who impedes other women’s progress, reinforcing gender bias. That is, “the Queen Bee Syndrome is considered to be a phenomenon that leads to gender discrimination in the workplace” (Derks et al., 2011:519). However, current studies of the queen bee syndrome in the workplace, such as that by Ellemers et al., 2004; Mavin, 2008; Derks et al., (2011) have not explored the discriminatory behaviours of female leaders in workplaces that are gender segregated.

5.4.4 The role of Saudi patriarchal and segregated culture in co-constructing ethical leadership at DSU

These and the previous socio-cultural factors identified in this study contribute to our understanding of the deeply rooted issues affecting ethical leadership, which are embedded within local meanings and circumstances. Significantly, patriarchal contexts and a gender segregated university setting inherently shape masculine discriminatory leadership practices that have long been historically and culturally embodied. Saudi social traditions and norms have been ethically normalised and rationalised, and under these the dominant conventions privilege the male perspective. According to our data, this reality currently shapes much of the ethos-masculine forms of leadership that are practiced by the female leaders at DSU.

The academic participants' responses in the interviews reflected a paradoxical reluctance to accept their leaders' patriarchal behaviour. While many of the participants rejected traditional masculine leadership practices, they did exhibit a tendency to accept gendered stereotypes of leadership. This means that female academics question and challenge the power of the status quo, while simultaneously accepting cultural preferences and conventions that rely on their being the subordinates of men. This dialectic of notions is multi-layered and can be discussed at a number of different levels. On one level, female leaders' endorsement of 'masculine' leadership practices comes from traditions of historical cultural male-domination which has long made the Saudi workplace a man's world. Since Saudi women first escaped the boundaries and constraints that confined them purely to domestic work, they have had to negotiate different social role constructions than their male counterparts: "Cultural processes assume that a woman will marry early; that her contribution to the family will be as homemaker; that the household will be headed by a man and that the man will provide financially and 'protect' the family" (Metcalf, 2011:133).

The leaders at DSU have long assumed that they would play a symbolic role, as the only Saudi female educational leaders with access to an independent source of power. This is based on the notion of an exposed 'feminist' pride in leadership and holding power over female subordinates. As Mavin and colleagues argue "women elites learn to manoeuvre the gendered double bind through various strategies, whereby they are expected to perform femininities associated with being a 'woman' whilst also demonstrating masculinities expected of those in elite positions" (2014:441). Accordingly, she regenerates paternalistic, masculine and discriminatory leadership practices reproducing the way men lead, instead of

questioning the ethics behind their behaviours, reconceptualising them in terms of women's rights to social justice.

On another level, several female subordinates referred to their leaders' masculine practices as a 'female' issue, neglecting the role of patriarchal and cultural co-construction. According to Adler, "A woman leader is not viewed as androgynous or undifferentiated from her male counterparts. She is viewed as a woman who is a leader" (1999:259). Gender consciousness is dichotomised in a segregated university that leaves no space for the majority of the females' academics to think beyond this approach to gendered opposition. Reinforcing an ideology of female misogyny in a women's university recreates another binary between women who serve those in power and women who resist women that are in power. A female leader who serves authority, as Cockburn (1991:8) argues, "cannot escape patriarchy, even by climbing to elite status by marriage or career promotion, as she will modify her own subordination only at the expense of that of other women". On the other hand, many female subordinates struggle with masculine leadership behaviours in the segregated universities reinforcing ideologies that rationalise the problem as a 'female' leadership issue. With regard to this Al-Bulushi (2010) recommends that "the provision of women's rights needs to be engineered by women, which will allow the development of more and better support for new evolving female roles" (257).

5.5 Summary

The chapter has analysed the findings and demonstrated the utility of interrelated dialectics in establishing and interrogating key issues affecting ethical and counterproductive leadership practices at DSU. Perceptions of female academics and leaders at DSU were evaluated, as the conflict and constraints of insights and experiences afforded answers to the questions raised in the research. The dialectical approach provides an extensive understanding of the tensions between ethical and counterproductive leadership behaviour, revealing how these are co-constructed and mutually implicated in a distinctive organisational context. At DSU, evidence of inequality and unfair leadership behaviour is noticeably evident. It is further interesting to highlight that the analysis and indications provided in the literature regarding ethical leadership and counterproductive behaviour were unable to explain all of the findings. This chapter contributed empirical answers and notions from the Saudi context to expand on the evidence presented in the relevant literature. The next and final chapter will draw together the findings from this study, introducing the key

implications relating to female ethical leadership in Saudi HEIs, as well as highlighting insights that might usefully guide future research.

Chapter Six

Conclusions and research implications

6.1 Overview

The final chapter of the thesis commences by revisiting the original research aims and objectives and linking them with the key findings. It then reinforces the connections identified in the literature and the literature review, as explained in detail in chapter five. The purpose here is to pull together the various analytical threads and key empirical elements of the research so the positioning of the work within existing debates and the contribution to knowledge are both evident. In addition, this closing chapter offers some additional comment on the applied implications of the research, before acknowledging the main limitations in the scale and nature of the investigation and offering recommendations for future study directions.

6.2 Key Findings

In view of the empirical and theoretical gaps discussed in chapters 1 and 2, the thesis set out to explore tensions relating to leadership thinking and practices in the gender segregated context of higher education in Saudi Arabia. A key concern at the point of departure related to whether, or to what extent, gender related insights into the leadership domain are perceived as ethical by leaders, while being simultaneously regarded as counterproductive by employees. The principal focus when addressing this essential element of the study is DSU, a distinctive educational context in which the expressed views of Saudi female leaders and academics are capable of casting light on hitherto neglected aspects of leadership and gender research. Their understandings and experiences of leadership, and their appreciation of social dynamics in a segregated university, represent neglected voices in what is a rarely recognised although highly significant organisational and cultural context.

Employing the empirical results of this investigation, female faculty members' insights reflected some very traditional masculine understandings. Female leaders apparently reproduce the ethical notions, values and standard leadership practices that are evident across all Saudi HEIs. Female leaders appear to have adopted the legacy of patriarchy and tribalism as a regular feature in their relationships with subordinates. The respondents in the interviews were very clear about expressing their view that DSU was governed in line with patriarchal and paternalistic conceptions of authority and leadership that are commonplace throughout male-dominated Saudi institutions. Ethical concerns expressed by female

academics involved consideration of their right to participate in the process of leadership under prevailing conditions, and their personally highly valued religious views, with some hoping that their own female leaders in the HEI context would achieve and promote female empowerment, as is set out in the vision statements articulated by some of the DSU leaders. However, the findings revealed three chief forms of inter-dialectic power, individualistic, organisational and cultural, which counteract these hopes and visions. These are embedded in a gendered context that creates tension, instead of building unity among women in their appreciation of leadership, also revealing contradictory assessments of ethical and counterproductive leadership behaviours.

Progress in this study involved interpreting the perceptions and reactions of female leaders and academics at DSU, to pursue a clear understanding of their views regarding ethical leadership issues and their experiences with any counterproductive consequences. Indeed, from the DSU case, the accumulated evidence contrasts markedly with the noticeable lack of similar references within the current leadership literature; including in Arabic contexts such as Saudi Arabia. I believe that the findings of this thesis are significant because they offer an in depth cultural exploration of leadership within this gender segregated country in a domain that extant research has failed to investigate with any theoretical seriousness or analytical sensitivity. Although these findings are not necessarily generalisable, they add significantly to the current stock of knowledge, and provide a basis for an open minded discussion into how mainstream leadership literature has ‘othered’ non-western views, insights and experiences. In my opinion, such insights emphasise the necessity to address implicit hegemonic masculine dominance, as a means to maintain social hierarchy and female marginalisation in different organisational and cultural contexts worldwide.

As a first step towards justifying the conclusions that will be reached in this chapter, the research outcomes will be summarised according to each of the three main research objectives upon which this investigation was based.

6.2.1 To explore how constructions of ethical leadership are created and justified by both female leaders and academics in DSU

The first research objective was designed to investigate the core perceptions of DSU leaders and academics with regard to the meaning of ethical leadership. The majority of the participants shed light on the individualistic abstract definitions of what comprises ‘the ethical leader’, revealing both an optimistic and the dark side to leader-centred views. As

Harter (2006:90) noted; in leadership studies “dualisms pop up everywhere”, generating a traditional view of ethical/unethical leader that manifests as a result of the ‘Great Man’ concept combined with other examples of masculinised leadership identities. Notions concerning ethical leadership characteristics emerged in the data and are embodied in heroic understandings of the leader figure. In highly distinctive workplaces, such as DSU, the views of female leaders generally reveal an embodiment of privileged personal power, which is expressed in their sense of being successfully empowered women able to emphasise their masculine attributes. Several leaders, as illustrated in chapter four, connected images of ethical behaviour in leadership to individual righteous and moral obligations focused on work ethics.

However, when describing the ethical leader, the overall perceptions and reactions of female academic participants was such that social and relational traits and skills are routinely more valued than personal achievements and success. These leader-centred perceptions appeared in the data under three main themes, as follows. Firstly, several of the responses from leaders emphasised a connection between what they termed ethical leadership and being an effective ‘role model’. The idea that *Qiadah* – leadership - is linked to *Qudwah* - role model - indicates there are key expectations of individualistic moral virtue, and the capacity to serve as a good example to followers. The views of the female leaders reveal a complex pull between different ideas. As explained in the previous chapter, recognising leaders as role models, and achieving ‘common good’ in the university context exposed female subordinates to a sense of ‘alienation’. Drawing on the narratives of academic staff, it emerges that the majority of leaders who use their power for ‘influence’ rely on their view about what is right and wrong, and what appears to be toxic. The differences evidenced in these perceptions shed light on polarised and polarising views regarding how one person’s role model could be perceived as another person’s unethical leader. This ethical/counterproductive dialectic is rooted within individualistic forms of power, that generate both effective role modelling and toxic conduct simultaneously.

In addition, a major finding that has emerged in relation to this theme concerned the spiritual and religious rationality that informs what it means to ‘be’ an ethical leader. As the data clarified, several leaders appear to have modified their religious consciousness to fit with their individualistic notions of what comprises ethical leadership. Taking into consideration the importance of religion in shaping ethical principles, such as *Ihsan* (goodness, kindness), *Rahma* (mercy) and *Adl* (justice), the data presented the tensions among explanations and

both individual and social interpretations of religious and spiritual understandings of ethical leadership. A number of the leaders' emphasised the role of religious responsibility when seeking ethical leadership through their connection with *Allah* (God). Leaders who rely on their religious identity and the notion that they are acting as an ethical leader typically expected to have their moral authority appreciated by their followers. Meanwhile, those participants who reflected on the details of Islamic ethics appeared to focus on the 'social' practice of virtue, rather than claims associated with self-images relative to those above or below them in the hierarchy. Therefore, it appears that Islamic principles such as *Adl* (justice) created a relational responsibility that extended the parameters of leaders' behaviour beyond 'good virtue' to include the social consequences of their actions and the implications for their followers.

Another key finding linked to this theme affords a number of insights into the heroic qualities and charismatic personality of ethical leaders, as well as their various unethical traits. The majority of the participants, both leaders and lecturers, mentioned examples of both ethical and unethical leadership qualities. The data revealed that a number of leaders and lecturers effectively described the ethical characteristics of leaders, including their propensity to show passion in their work, embrace emotional intelligence and not concealing any feelings of vulnerability. In terms of unethical persona, several participants described characteristics such as being motivated by the desire for success, being a perfectionist, or a tendency towards being inconsiderate. Drawing on the study's findings, certain leaders viewed themselves as ethical based on the qualities they believe that they have, while a number of the faculty members either described several traits of an ethical leader or those undesirable traits they found were common among the leaders with whom they work.

6.2.2 To investigate the dialectics between ethical leadership and counterproductive behaviour in a very distinctive and under researched organisational context

The second research objective was intended to provide evidence in the form of perspectives concerning organisational-centred interpretations of the ethical/counterproductive leadership dialectic. Based on the participants' experiences, the findings revealed that DSU appears to rationalise and accept certain leadership practices as 'ethical' in accordance with managerialist norms and values, hierarchal structures and standards of quality assurance. In this context, DSU's hierarchal form of power and the official position of one female rector and other elite leaders (mainly male) generated policies, procedures and goals that would

enable them to achieve their university's vision in a manner that connected only with leaders at collegiate levels neglecting the varied wealth of academic views and experiences available. The dominant group in DSU generate procedures and rules reflecting the benefits of privileged leaders and recreating patterns of hierarchies and inequality in the form of organisational values. The clash between organisational values and wider social and religious values was evident here, and produced a clear tension between leaders and academics in the university setting. The data portrayed the existence of masculine leadership practices and constructs that have encouraged the female leaders at DSU to become preoccupied with efficiency and effectiveness when pursuing their expressed goals. Female leaders appeared to be convinced that effectiveness standards and policies are linked to ethical leadership, as these requirements and procedures aim to transform the university for the better. However, the responses and reactions of faculty members, especially lecturers, reflected various challenging circumstances and concerns pertaining to the failure to develop relational collegiality efforts between leaders and the academics they oversee. This underlines the impact and significance of institutional structure and processes in facilitating social injustice.

Under the first subtheme, the data described significant perceptions of organisationally driven leadership practices, considered to be ethically justified by referencing managerial powers that engender goal-oriented leadership behaviours. The majority of the participants, especially the lecturers, described processes of managerial transformation that require lecturers to attain effective standards of performance. According to these participants, administrative and bureaucratic mechanisms reproduce leadership practices that are morally unacceptable in the pursuit of efficiency. The pressures imposed on leadership to achieve managerial ends at the expense of humanitarian values resulted in academics' having disappointing reactions. The data revealed the extent to which faculty members are willing to confront leaders' attitudes about performance management and challenge their attainment of effectiveness standards. In the findings chapter, this thesis exposed how lecturers negotiate the pressures of performance appraisals, stating that they offered no apparent added value and served to discourage many of them from pursuing their academic careers further. Citing examples of administrative pressure, the academics who participated in this study identified ethical violations that arise from leaders' interventions which are designed to place constraints on their academic autonomy and freedom.

The second subtheme that appeared in the findings relates to the hierarchy and centralised structure at the university. A number of faculty members identified that a top down structural construct centralised the direction of the decision making process and limited autonomy and involvement at departmental and collegial levels. According to several participants, ethical concerns arose principally because of the limited communication across the structured hierarchy. The gaps and divisions created by the top-down leadership direction have produced inflexible leadership behaviours at the collegial level at DSU within limited local authority positions. According to the data, the academics had concerns about the way in which university leadership imposed regulations and rules strictly and without recourse to their involvement. Centralisation and the top-down flow of knowledge and information, according to the majority of the academic participants, led them to feel disaffected, poorly motivated and silenced under the broad span of senior leadership control. A number of the academics mentioned the unfair impact of the hierarchal leadership structure administratively, as it limits their academic freedoms and problem solving, and eventually results in low levels of innovation within their work, as well as limiting even their students' creativity.

The final section of organisational-based elements within this theme to emerge in the findings related to quality assurance standards. The results revealed that numerous respondents feel frustrated with the university leadership's preoccupation with quality checklist reviews, which reflects the wider Saudi HE system's managerialism, which they perceive to be setting unreasonable standards which further constrain academics' independence. The majority of the participants explained their ethical concerns regarding leadership direction and the restrictive standards that apply and limit teaching and learning processes and techniques. These quality concerns appeared repeatedly in the data, and were perceived by the majority of the academics as exerting a pattern of control over academic content, educational curriculum, teaching method and quality evaluation.

6.2.3 To reveal the significance of relational power dynamics and socio-cultural construction of ethical leadership for employee experiences and workplace behaviour, with particular attention to counterproductive outcomes

A major dimension of the findings relates to the socio-cultural themes that cover perspectives relating to contextually embedded interpretations of ethical leadership, as well as the meanings and the social expectations that inform female leaders' practices. The data

conveyed interesting regional and cultural perceptions, heavily influenced and for many respondents formed by the patriarchal nature of the Saudi gender segregated context. All of the participants in this study chose to explain that certain leadership behaviours are necessarily associated with specific Saudi socio-cultural and religious norms. The findings under this theme highlight the significance of having an extremely patriarchal social system in terms of the co-construction of masculine leaders' practices.

In the first socio-cultural subtheme, it emerged in the interviews that debate about paternalistic preferences and the practices of leaders towards their academic staff, and justifications to promote the protection of collective ethical welfare, were ongoing, certainly among the female academics. The findings also showed that several leaders at DSU tended to rationalise their behaviour by continually reinforcing their paternal relationships with employees. According to these leaders, a paternalistic approach creates a united work force, as father-like leadership behaviour is a traditional and socially accepted way of engaging in ethical practices, by providing protection – *quama* - support and care. A number of these leaders clarified they have a preference for paternalistic leadership, assuming it to be by nature an ethical act. However, the responses from the academics described very different perceptions with regard to these behaviours, most often regarding it as destructive due to the nature of power correlated within. Studies regarding paternalistic leadership suggest that this approach is accepted in eastern cultures, including studies focusing on India, Turkey, China, and Pakistan (Ayman et al., 2000; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006), and is negatively perceived in western organisational cultures where it is perceived of as “benevolent dictatorship” (Northouse, 1997:39). However, there was evidence presented in this research, that at DSU the academics' reactions to leaders' paternalistic behaviour considered this to be unfair and to have a tendency towards wielding control that was uncomfortable for them. The findings gathered from the interviews in particular captured a number of opinions describing how paternal conduct creates a gap between leaders and their employees, and reinforces their perceived superiority and desire to limit academics' autonomy. References to leaders' paternalistic behaviour as being counterproductive, and “a hidden and insidious form of discrimination” (Colella, Garcia, Reidel, & Triana, 2005:26), was commonplace among the views of the female academic respondents.

Another significant finding from the participant data was that traditional norms and notions have an impact on the misuse of power in leadership practices. There are several work behaviours rooted within tribal and patriarchal cultures, which are governed by male

authority that needs to be ethically questioned. Several leaders at DSU adopted behaviours that reflected their background socialisation as a way to protect their social networks within the workplace. Being part of a collective culture that is family-oriented undoubtedly encouraged some leaders to take advantage of their positions to ‘benefit’ people from their extended family or tribe. These leaders created or reinforced social networks within the university, and were perceived by their allied groups as ‘loyal’ because they reproduce – *Sumāa* – a family legacy. Some of the respondents also provided cultural rationales to clarify understandings of ethical behaviour on this issue, citing and prioritising traditional norms instead of focusing on social equity. Ethical considerations, such as favouritism towards work allies were considered by a majority of the other participants as demonstrating patterns of unfair treatment. In many of the examples given in this study, the female leaders tended to adopt male paternalistic behaviour unconsciously when expressing the desire to fulfil tribal expectations, in order to gain acceptance from their personal social group and approval of their tribal identity within and beyond DSU. The behaviour of these leaders was mainly believed to be appropriate by their tribal work allies, although not by the majority of their female academic colleague. Several of the respondents noted that an ethical identification based on tribalism affected their behaviour and contributed to unfair decision making.

One of the major findings relating to socio-cultural interpretations of leadership in Saudi HEIs addresses the connection between ethical and male social role expectations and gender-role stereotypes. According to the findings, the common social perception that male leaders are more ethical than female leaders and that there are hidden gender discriminatory interpretations of leadership expectations, had an impact on the participants at DSU. Reflecting on the gender segregated nature of the university, gender prejudice was argued to create socially biased beliefs against women, both as leaders (e.g. inflexible, inconsiderate or indecisive) and as followers (e.g. sensitive, dramatic and emotional). Several of the academics explained their disapproval of female leadership, and noted that they would expect male leaders to be more ethical. The Saudi cultural narrative remains powerful as a mechanism to reproduce male-symbolised images in which women are judged negatively when adopting what is naturally perceived to be a male role. Many female leaders continue to behave in ways that mirror masculine or male-like leadership approaches to align themselves with autocratic forms of power and the hierarchal structures that are commonplace in Saudi organisational culture. The findings reveal examples of gender stereotypes and conscious and unconscious biases against women in the segregated university context.

6.3 Evaluating the research contribution

By reviewing the current field of knowledge, and mapping out the dualisms of ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviour, the conceptualisation in this study contributes to knowledge in this field by revealing the complexities and contradictory tendencies associated with ethical leadership and its counterproductive side in a highly distinctive context, namely Saudi HEIs. The thesis offers a deeper understanding of ethical and counterproductive leadership contradictions and ambiguous gendered power relations by exploring the various experiences and perceptions of a university's female leaders and academics. It investigates ethical and social issues of leadership in an under-studied and under-theorised context, specifically in a gender segregated organisation. In this respect, the study makes a valuable contribution to knowledge about organisational behaviour and analyses of ethics and leadership in the Saudi context. This makes it especially significant since no previous study has shed light on such a gender segregated organisational context. It provides fresh insights into women's voices in the Saudi workplace and in HEIs. In the absence of previous research in this distinctive context of a Women's' university, the thesis addresses a clear gap in the literature by opening up a window on Saudi female leaders and academics' insights and into ethical issues of leadership, followership and workplace behaviour, deliberating individual, institutional and cultural aspects, which have been neglected for too long, certainly within Saudi Arabia.

This thesis has also argued that an alternative theoretical framework was essential to reveal the layers of meanings, power relations and conflicts that matter in this context. From the discussion of the thesis findings in chapters four and five, it is apparent that applying a dialectical approach has allowed the researcher to expose important findings about multiple interrelated forms of power and leadership practices, and to reveal their contradictory and ambiguous ethical outcomes. Overall, the findings of the current thesis contribute to theoretical debates around gender and ethical leadership by explaining how masculinity, managerialism and patriarchy are relationally co-constructed among the female leadership engaged in Saudi HEIs. It confirms the point that that several counterproductive and destructive behaviours among female leaders are rationalised ethically by referring to male-normed values and patterns about leadership. The university's culture is undoubtedly gendered, and therefore the meanings, beliefs, behaviours and experiences of even seemingly ethical leaders are typically male-normed, posing continuing problems for female academic staff.

To this extent, the thesis has been able to effectively highlight the value of investigating ethical leadership and its counterproductive practices as socially constructed phenomena, from within the particular context of cultural and social conventions that exist in Saudi Arabia. The research also makes a significant empirical contribution to ongoing debates on critical leadership studies and employees' experiences of work and leadership with a non-western scope, through the presentation of distinctive data that reveals original and interesting insights into the practice of leadership in Saudi Arabia and more broadly, the middle east. The theoretical framework also offers an additional contribution to critical leadership studies and analyses, by demonstrating the continuing value of the dialectical approach at three interrelated levels: individualistic, institutional and socio-cultural. This enabled the researcher to challenge both dominant heroic mainstream theories of ethical leadership and also accounts of counterproductive work behaviour that exclude leaders and focus narrowly on workers. It also successfully questioned political views concerning critical leadership and misbehaviour assumptions. This was achieved by investigating local understandings and relational processes within the particular context of DSU, drawing on the lived experiences of leadership co-construction processes and consequences as reported by both leaders and members of academic staff.

This thesis offers a significant contribution to the extant call for research into critical leadership studies that focus on 'putting leadership in its place' (The 18th International Studying Leadership Conference, 2019). This highlights the importance of understanding the culture and context of leadership and knowing its standing within its environment.

This exploration of leadership in the Saudi HE context contributes to the critical leadership studies movement, notably with an explicit cultural interpretation of ethics, gender and leadership behaviour that has been missing to date. The uniqueness of the gender segregated organisational context in this research sheds light on the importance of the place and how an understanding of leadership behaviour is incomplete without accounting for its social and local context.

Set against the dominant western perspective on ethical leadership, as well as prevailing generalisations about victimized Saudi females (generally and within leadership), this thesis adds valuable insights to the stock of knowledge about the importance of a 'place-based view'. It sheds light on an important range of societal values, traditions, religious beliefs and local ethical assumptions that influence interpretations about Saudi female leadership and followership, focusing on their agency, behaviours and resistance. In the absence of such

research in such a uniquely gender segregated context, this thesis fills a significant gap in the literature. It does so by sharing the experiences and insights of Saudi women on leadership behaviour, ethical complexity and the everyday consequences of working in academic institutions. The findings of this research contribute to 'leadership and place' debates by revealing a gender segregated place and context in all its complexity, and calling attention to the significance of Saudi female experiences and insights in the higher education sector.

6.4 Research implications

The findings of this thesis have significant implications for further research into leadership development and normative responses to the ethical consequences of such practices in Saudi institutions especially those in higher education, with the particular focus on leadership within female universities. There are also lessons for other female only firms in other sectors given the workplace significance of wider cultural, religious, patriarchal and paternalistic influences. In this case, the findings provide a detailed insight into the perspectives and lived experiences of female faculty members, by providing an environment in which participants felt able to expose their complaints and experiences of ethical tensions within the Saudi HEIs leadership system. This research, therefore, offers a fresh and considerable data set with significant value for reflection on the respective situations of Saudi female faculty members and female university leaders. This evidence as presented can be used to assist in influencing change in the social and institutional dynamics and power relations that affect female faculty members and workers in Saudi Arabia, as well as other Gulf region countries due to the similarity of cultural and social backgrounds. However, change depends upon the openness of established interests and the confidence of females in both their leadership and academic roles to reflect upon the tensions revealed here, and to seriously examine and develop alternative leadership strategies and models.

6.4.1 Implications for Practitioners

It is incumbent upon Saudi HEIs to deliver and develop training programmes and opportunities for female leaders and faculty members that counter patriarchal and paternalistic behaviours, as a means to expand on and explain gender equality and increase the role of women in leadership and in community-building. Training courses should highlight issues of gender-based prejudice in the workplace and introduce anti-discrimination policies that can inform leadership in practice. This should help to raise awareness about women's rights in the legal domain and to underscore their significant

participation in the area of public administration. In addition, training could be extended for female workers as a means to encourage the advancement of women and female agency at an individual level, as well as promoting women's collective ability to challenge enduring inequalities.

Exploring Saudi female leaders' insights and the experiences of those who 'made it' to the top in the university can offer to other women who aim to lead a valuable understanding of power relations in leadership and the tensions and dilemmas that come with its multiple, multi layered behaviours and social dynamics. This will help them identify and possibly address the sort of everyday social tensions they may encounter with female faculty members, and especially male academics, managers and leaders. Also, it may also help them to consider ways of mitigating and managing institutional pressure in bureaucratic work cultures, and develop confidence as they try to find ways of resisting, influencing or dealing with managerial practices.

6.4.2 Implications for Policymakers

One of the principal implications for practice raised here concerns the necessity to open up channels for female academics to voice their disagreements and announce policies to protect those who criticise the university's system, to the extent that criticism would be viewed constructively. Leaders should support the launch of a wide-ranging relational cultural dialogue between academics and their directors, heads of department, deans, and chancellors. As Harrow (1993, p. 146) noted, 'leadership, when dominated by one segment of society, suffers from a narrow perspective, a lack of richness of ideas and ideals'. The prevailing culture at women-only universities should also be aligned more comfortably with female-oriented and relational environmental factors. Female senior leaders need to consider bottom-up communication, rather than persisting with masculinized notions of top-down, in order to benefit from and respond to female faculty members' capacity to cooperate. Such a relational approach towards female leadership would open up a fresh understanding of leader-follower social dynamics, and highlight relational ethics and social considerations to reform the meaning of female empowerment and to value individuals' feminine characteristics.

Policy makers need to address the tensions and disadvantages that are created by managerial pressures to achieve targets as an approved nexus of effective leadership and efficient management in the university sector. Supposedly rational, systematic, fixed and measurable academic work cultures have potentially serious dehumanising consequences for academics,

and these compound the struggles and inequalities that face women at work in universities, limiting their autonomy and innovation. Policy makers should openly acknowledge and then seriously strive to address these problems, ideally with some innovative interventions to promote a human-oriented environment (instead of a results-oriented one) where leaders and faculty members can feel and be empowered in flexible collegial work processes and structures.

6.4.3 Implications for Saudi HE Sector

This research also provides useful information to benefit Saudi HE decision makers with the recent expressed goal of reformulating of policies that are more likely to generate equal treatment for women who choose to participate in academic work. The current study generated and can provide valuable reference data to help accelerate equal treatment and women's advancement in the workplace. There are limitations to what has been achieved in the current era of Saudi female empowerment, and there is an urgent need to address the various barriers, i.e., cultural, historical, and institutional, that women encounter as a result of the patriarchal pressures that create masculine styles of leadership and reproduce them amongst and against female members of Saudi universities. As Hoeritz (2013) recommends, organizations should 'discover the relationship between culture and women's advancement and identify cultural conditions that promote or inhibit women as leaders' (p. 218). Higher education institutions should also ideally update policies that would ensure the continuous progress of women and the aims of the national transformational plan of Saudi Arabia in the area of female empowerment. The National Transformational Plan (TNP, 2020) is focused on increasing women's participation in the labour force, and in leadership positions, by launching initiatives that contribute to women's empowerment and to the achievement of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Higher education institutions should also strive to develop a national vision and adopt policies that are genuinely capable of supporting women's participation and rights in leadership and academia. However, this requires that serious attention be given to ongoing restrictive practices, and to overcoming the frustrations that have been exposed by this doctoral research.

6.5 Research limitations

As with any study or research project, this research has some limitations. Firstly, this thesis is limited due to the collection of data from a restricted research sample in a site-specific context. This means that the extent to which the study results might be applicable to other academic institutions are difficult to determine, not least since the DSU context is so

culturally unique. This research pertains to a very specific moment in space, time and place and therefore the sampling applied was particularly focused on attaining the best participants. A core issue I encountered when collecting data from participants was the opportunities available to access and recruit faculty members willing to participate, as this reflected and generated both cultural and practical concerns. As mentioned previously in chapter 3, the primary challenge faced was the lack of sufficient institutional support to recruit willing participants. Many faculty members stated that the interviews would be too time consuming, as they work within tight schedules. Nevertheless, twenty-five participants accepted the invitation to participate, which allowed the researcher to gather interesting and telling data. As Kelly (2011:53) described, the goal of a study is “to explore the experiences of these particular women rather than to draw conclusions regarding the overall population of females”.

Another limitation of this research is the potential for bias on the part of the researcher influencing the findings. As I clarified in the methodology chapter, being a Saudi female academic necessarily influenced the research motivation, data collection and analysis due to the researcher’s pre-conceived assumptions and interpretations. Self-critical reflexive methods helped to clarify the approach of the researcher when evaluating the data and analysing the text. This is a process that necessitates “having an ongoing conversation experience while simultaneously living in the moment; while voice is presenting the author's self while simultaneously writing the respondents’ accounts and representing their selves” (Coffey, 1999:132). During the data collection and analysis processes, I continually reminded myself of the influence of my theoretical position and tendency to shape the research process, while continuously attempting to act as the ‘detached observer’, ‘remaining open’ to my own interpretations and being aware of the possible influence of my ‘insider’ identity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). “We cannot rid ourselves of the cultural self we bring with us into the field any more than we can disown the eyes, ears, and skin through which we take in our intuitive perceptions about the new and strange world we have entered” (Olesen, 1998:314–315).

It could be argued that the result of this thesis would be applicable only to DSU faculty members. Because of the difficulty in recruiting participants, I conducted the study with only 25 participants; this research could thus be viewed as a small-scale exploratory study, where it is not possible to generalize the findings. As mentioned previously, the main issue I encountered was how to access potential participants. Therefore, this study is particular to a

specific time and place; and sight-specific responses and insights here do not represent other professional women in the Saudi organisational context.

The thesis might be critiqued for my engagement as a researcher and for possibly romanticizing some of the agency of Saudi female academics, their insights and their forms of resistance. For example, some might argue that the outcomes of the research could be a reflection of what I hoped to see or anticipated. To counter that impression I would draw attention, again, to my research approach and academic sense of purpose. I kept reflecting on my “particular political, historical, and intellectual location” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 45). The boundaries between participants’ narratives and subjectivities and my own subjective and personal knowledge were undoubtedly blurred at times as I felt an acute sensitivity towards their views and connected with their unacceptance of an unfair system. However, this was also a strength of the research process when coupled with independent academic scrutiny and respect for the rules of evidence and responsible respondent engagement. I felt the need to carefully consider and call attention to the views expressed by Saudi female followers’, without exaggeration, inappropriate sympathy or undue sentimentality, since their voices have been neglected in the literature and in policy pronouncements about HE reform and about women in the leadership of Saudi institutions. My respondents had serious comments to make and telling experiences to recognise and to inform debates about the nature and future of Saudi higher education. This is how I would respond to Abu-Lughod’s (1990) claim that “there is perhaps a tendency to romanticize resistance, to read all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated” (p. 42).

6.6 Future research avenues

In light of the conclusions and implications presented in this study, we close by highlighting some recommendations for future research. While the development of critical leadership studies to date has explored several potential paths as a means to recognise the dialectical nature of leadership and to problematise asymmetrical power within this process, there are three main areas that require further exploration, and which would valuably contribute to a multi-dimensional dialectics of ethical and counterproductive leadership behaviours research agenda.

Firstly, the findings of this research shed light on the ethical problematisation of leadership, focusing on power, and the role of gender power relations in contexts where segregation

exists. The majority of previous studies on ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005; Northouse, 2013; Lemoine et al., 2019) have concentrated chiefly on developing an individualistic-based lens to perceive the ethical traits and behaviours of leaders, disregarding social, institutional and cultural interpretations of ethical norms. The majority have failed to acknowledge the role of relational power on leaders' counterproductive practices. As the current study has emphasised, there are multiple forms of power present in a gendered context; thus, it is anticipated that further studies would explore taken for granted 'ethical' leadership practices that reveal counterproductive data and extend this to other socially unjust aspects of race, ethnicity, age, class and socio-economic status or any form of diversity within an organisation.

Moreover, the present study focused on female perspectives in a single Saudi higher education institution. It would undoubtedly be interesting and useful for another study to compare and explore the organisational and socio-cultural aspects of female workplace experience in other gendered segregated workplaces, whether in the Arab region and more broadly. Providing data that can offer a comparison across several cultural and social contexts would provide further insights into female experiences and forms of masculine ethics in the process of leadership co-construction. Forthcoming studies could explore insightful comparative views relating to ethics and gender issues among HEIs leadership, and concerning how perceptions contrast or complement each other. Evaluating female viewpoints on leadership practices that attempt to reinforce the marginalisation of women with structural and cultural forms of power would be informative, and enable us to offer additional ethical justifications and avoid misinterpretations that would otherwise obstruct female academics' rights and patterns of professional progression.

Finally, a further avenue that would be worthy of exploration is detailed comparative research on additional Saudi HE institutions. This could be achieved by including a larger sample size involving both male and female faculty members. It would be insightful to compare universities that are male-dominated in leadership with other women only institutions to gain deeper understandings into 'ethical' social constructions within Saudi HE, and to hear the male side of the story. It would also be interesting to replicate this research using two universities as case studies in order to shed light on dialectical explorations of male/female leadership and investigate both men and women's experiences in segregated study contexts. Moreover, it would be beneficial to examine gendered interpretations of ethical leadership and understand how the perceptions of both genders

contrast and complement one another. This could usefully extend the value of the current doctoral investigation.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Time of the interview:

Place:

Interviewee:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview. It would take maximum 60 minutes. Here are copies of **the participant information sheet** and **consent form**, please take your time and read them. If you have any question or concern, please do not hesitate to ask.

Interview questions

1. How long have you been working in the university?
2. What are the positions you acquired in this university?
3. What does your work involve?
4. How do you view the leadership priorities and principles in this university?
5. What is your perception about the role of leaders and followers?
6. What are the challenges academics and /or leaders encounter?
7. What is ethical leadership in your view?
8. What are the main issues affecting the development and/or application of ethical leadership in the university?
9. How are ethical priorities and practices justified by your leaders?
10. Are these justifications impact on leaders' behaviour? How?
11. How important is the relationship between leaders and academics? Why?
12. Do leaders' behaviour impact on their relationship with academics? How?
13. How academics react to counterproductive/ unethical behaviour?
14. Does gender play any part in these?
15. How do you view female leadership?
16. Do you think the university's female-only environment develop a sense of women empowerment? How?
17. How do you describe the experience being in a segregated university led by women?
18. Do gender and different patterns of male and female work have an impact on counterproductive practices of leadership? How?
19. How do female academics react to counterproductive behaviours of female leaders?
20. How do you view the future of Saudi HEIs and development of ethical leadership?
21. How do you view the future of Saudi women empowerment in HEIs' leadership and academia?

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet



Adam Smith
Business School

Participant Information Sheet

Title of project and researcher details

A critical exploration of ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviour in the Saudi higher education sector

Researcher: Manal Almarshd

Supervisors: Professor Martin Beirne and Professor Fiona Wilson

Course: PhD in Management

‘You are being invited to take part in a research study **exploring the ideas about ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviour. This is focused on education institutions, mainly in Saudi Arabia.** This is part of my work towards gaining a PhD degree at the University of Glasgow.

Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the information on this page carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the importance of this research project?

The purpose of this research is to explore Saudi female employees’ perceptions of ethical and counterproductive leadership practices at the selected higher education institutions (HEI), in both male and female sections. Exploring your thoughts about leadership approaches, priorities and processes within your organisation and workplace will help me to gain a deeper understanding of the strengths and limitations of Saudi HEI and the quality of management and nature of the work experienced by academics and students. Your views, experiences, reactions and challenges could help to shape improvements and inform subsequent research on what ethical leadership involves and requires in Saudi HEI.

What do I need to know before participating?

- **It is up to you to decide if you want to take part in this study. You have the right not to take part of the study if you don’t wish to**

- Participation completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw any time and without giving reasons
- The study employs qualitative method (interviews and observation)
- Telephone interviews will be conducted with male participants and face-to-face interviews with female participants.
- Each individual interview will take about **45 min-60 min**
- The interviews will be conducted in your academic institution during work days and at a time to suit you
- If you agree, the interviews will be recorded so that the comments you make are accurately recorded. I can rely on notes if you don't want your interview to be recorded, and only need to mention this at the start
- Observations will be carried out in female workplaces, subject to agreement of all participants
- The study will involve one to two months of observation including meetings, in the school/college director's office and community meetings
- I will assign you pseudonyms (another name) so you are not identifiable
- You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to
- The research is interested in collective workplace experiences and views, so you are not under any personal examination or evaluation in relation to work tasks or performance. Your managers and colleagues have not been involved in setting the questions I will ask.

Usage of the data

Personal data and identifiers will be kept in a secured location by the researcher (locked cabinet in offices with limited access). Confidential data will be saved through data management support and deleted after 10 years, in line with the guidelines issued by the University of Glasgow. No one has the access to the data except me and my supervisors and examiners. The material may be used in future publications, both print and online without the use of identifiable data.

Confidentiality of Information

Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. If this was the case we would inform you of any decisions that might limit confidentiality.

Review of the study

This study has been reviewed and agreed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow

Contact for Further Information

Researcher: Manal Almarshd, email:

Supervisors: Professor Martin Beirne, email: Martin.Beirne@glasgow.ac.uk
Professor Fiona Wilson, email: Fiona.M.Wilson@glasgow.ac.uk

College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email:
Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this.

Appendix C: Interview Consent Form



Adam Smith
Business School

Interview Consent Form

Title of Project: A critical exploration of ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviour in the Saudi higher education sector

Name of Researcher: Manal Almarshd

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for this study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.
4. I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my employment arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.
5. I acknowledge that all names, direct quotes from the interview and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
6. I acknowledge that the material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
7. I acknowledge the material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

If agreeing, I consent/do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being audio-recorded.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix D: Meeting Observation Consent Form



Adam Smith
Business School

Meeting Observation Consent Form

Title of Project: A critical exploration of ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviour in the Saudi higher education sector

Name of Researcher: Manal Almarshd

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for this study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.
4. I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my employment arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.
5. I acknowledge that all names, direct quotes from commentary within the meeting and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
6. I acknowledge that the material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
7. I acknowledge the material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
8. I recognized that the researcher may take notes during the meeting to aid recollection and understand that there will be no identifying detail in these.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

If agreeing, I consent/do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being audio-recorded.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix E: Ethical Approval



Adam Smith
Business School

Dear Manal Almarshd

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: A critical exploration of ethical leadership and counterproductive work behaviour in the Saudi higher education sector

Application No: 400180008

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 30/09/2018
- Project end date: 30/09/2020
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences. Permissions you must provide are shown in the *College Ethics Review Feedback* document that has been sent to you.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research:
(https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf)
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, data, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The *Request for Amendments to an Approved Application* form should be used:
<https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/>

Yours sincerely,

Dr Muir Houston
College Ethics Officer